



BLAIR ATHOL



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BLAIR ATHOL.

VOL. I.



# BLAIR ATHOL

A Novel

BY "BLINKHOOLIE,"

AUTHOR OF

"THE TALE OF A HORSE," "HIDDEN TALENT," ETC.

*IN THREE VOLUMES.*

VOL. I.

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TO

Edelyn Roscawen,

SIXTH

VISCOUNT FALMOUTH,

THE ENGLISH THOROUGHbred HORSES'S BEST FRIEND,

IN WHOM IS PERSONIFIED

“SPORT”

PURE AND DISTINCT

FROM “GAMBLING” ON THE TURF,

THIS BOOK

IS, WITH PERMISSION, DEDICATED,

IN TOKEN OF

THE SINCERE ADMIRATION AND RESPECT OF

THE AUTHOR.

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## P R E F A C E.

A FEW words as to the object of this novel, for it has a very definite object, although, of course, it must depend for success upon such intrinsic merit as it by chance possesses. Blair Athol is specially chosen as the type of a horse that may raise better feelings in men's minds than those of mere money speculation.

Love of horses for their own sake, and of sport for its own sake, is chiefly needed to keep the English turf pure, and to make racing a national benefit.

The object—and no novel was ever worse for having a good object—is to show in these pages, however feebly, that the love of a good horse, so far from being hurtful, may even serve to keep a man straight in life, and certainly in the racing world; while a gambling spirit, not elevated by the pure ideal of sport, brings ruin on those who are swayed by it, no matter in what phase of existence. The race for wealth chokes all delicacy of sentiment, and deadens the brightness of old-fashioned honour. But much that seems fanciful, or even fantastic to those who look on everything from a hard, business-like

point of view, still may be worthy of grave consideration, if it is found that true aspirations in the question of sport may elevate and ennoble human nature. Much more could be said on this subject, but the above will suffice.

It is well to state that none of the principal characters in the book represent actual persons, nor is the plot—such as it is—drawn from any sequence of events in real life. But, on the other hand, strange and varied experiences have grouped themselves together so as to form incidents, none of which can be called purely imaginary or impossible, although they in no sense are given as chronicles of any facts whatever.

A sporting novel is a dangerous task to attempt ; it is so easy to write a bad one, so difficult to accomplish a good one. It would be presumptuous to anticipate success, and would show want of heart to expect a failure. Claiming nothing, then, and deprecating nothing, I will just commit my book to the tender mercies of my friends the public,

And rest,

Their obedient servant,

BLINKHOLIE.

# BLAIR ATHOL.

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## CHAPTER I.

“What glorious shape  
Comes this way moving?”—*Paradise Lost*, v. 308.

ON Langton Wold, in the spring of 1864, we have specially to notice a group of three persons: one an elderly and disreputable looking man, the next a youth of about eighteen, rather small and slight, the other a tall, delicate boy of twelve, who seemed preternaturally grave for his years. The last-mentioned two we are chiefly concerned with, and they must at once be introduced. The elder is Tom Blackburn, the eldest son of a well-known and

highly-respected clergyman who has the living of Newton, in Yorkshire. The other is Henry Jolliffe, whose father has been for many years member for the town of Conyers, also in Yorkshire.

The old man speaks first. "Here they come, sir; now watch them closely."

The eyes of the two youngsters sparkle with excitement at his words. "Where, where?"

"Why there," replies the old man, pointing to some objects advancing in the distance; "there's the old mare, Caller Ou, and there's Borealis, and there's Blair Athol. Now then, look out."

On they come, and the two bend their eyes eagerly on them, as they approach and sweep past at the distance of some sixty yards—Caller Ou creeping along with that queer, old-fashioned look about her that had made her so well known on many a race-course throughout England, from the time when she humbled

the pride of the Derby winner, the mighty Kettledrum, which was but the outset of her long and wonderfully victorious career. Borealis, whose action is simply perfection, the first child of the peerless Blink Bonny, a mere pony, but a veritable *multum in parvo* for all that. How she has distinguished herself, and how gallantly she has run with horses twice her size, is it not recorded in the chronicles of Weatherby?

Then last, but not least, comes one, skimming over the ground like a swallow, with action that can with truth be called the poetry of motion. This is Blair Athol, the dark horse. He has never yet seen a race-course, and yet it is whispered that it will go hard with Malton if he does not win the Derby. Many there are who are destined to know well that good blaze face in later days, but at this date the general public have other gods, and rely as usual on public form.



The three lookers-on burst forth in words of admiration.

“I never saw three such goers in my life,” said Tom.

“Ah! but look at them now, sir,” said the old man; “see from behind how true the young ’un moves.” And there is no doubt that Blair Athol goes straight as a line, without the slightest deviation, as steady as clock-work.

Henry Jolliffe remained wistfully gazing after the quickly retreating forms of the three horses, and seemed to be lost in thought, almost appearing to look into the future, though in fact he had no idea what an important influence that bald-faced chestnut was to have on his after life. At length he spoke: “Well, that *must* be a good horse.”

The old man laughed. “You’ve a promising eye in your head, young sir,” said he. “There’s not many that could have made a better choice.”

“ Well,” said Tom, “ let’s go and see John Scott’s horses.”

They walked on a short distance, and we who are with them cannot but appreciate the invigorating influence of the clear morning air. To those who love our British thoroughbred there is an indescribable charm about a morning thus spent on a training-ground ; and as we get older we ever recall with pleasure such times, when we see mighty steeds without the crush and turmoil of the race-course, meet cheery friends, and gain wondrous appetites for breakfast. Then the days spent looking over the all-important horses at home ; and the evenings made merry by the reminiscence of bygone times, and discussion of the present in some snug sanctum, where the army of touts and newspaper reporters would give the world to be.

But our three companions again take up their station, and again a lot of horses go

striding past in full life and power, cracking their nostrils in the superabundance of vigour. These are they who are to do battle for the black and gold of Mr. Bowes when their time comes.

Turning from them, Tom asks, "What about General Peel? He's won the Two Thousand Guineas, and he's backed to beat Blair Athol. Can he do it, think you?"

"I've never seen him," cried Henry, "but I shall back Blair Athol."

A thoughtful smile pervades the somewhat ill-favoured visage of the old man.

"You're about right, young gent. General Peel isn't in the hunt with him. You take it from me, Blair Athol will win the Derby, and be so good as to put me on a trifle."

The two friends thank him for his advice, and promise to follow it. As they turn to go away, he says to the younger, "Ax yer pardon, sir, but was you ever on a training-ground before?"

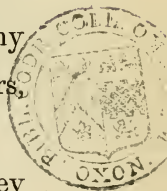
Henry, who thinks that the discrimination he has displayed will look all the better when he acknowledges that he has not been, replies in the negative.

“Then, sir, please, you must pay your footing: all sportsmen does it, sir, and I know you mean to be a sportsman.”

There was something about this remark not unpleasing to Henry, and after a consultation with Tom, he gave the old one ten shillings.

“Thank you, sir; you can always hear of me at the ‘Horse and Jockey:’ ask for Jimmy the tout, and you’ll find me. Good-bye, sirs, and don’t forget Blair Athol.”

Tom and Henry turned away, and, as they went towards the station, calculated how much money they could raise in one way or another to put on Blair Athol. After mature deliberation they concluded they could invest ten pounds for themselves, and one for Jimmy the tout. Without more ado they



therefore obtained a post-office order, and sent the amount to Mr. George Crook, with instructions to back Blair Athol to win the Derby. The commission being thus despatched, they returned by the train to Newton, where the good people at the Vicarage were quite unconscious that the hopeful youths had not been occupied with their weekly dancing lesson at Malton.

## CHAPTER II.

“Conrad seeks Medora’s tower ;

He looks in vain—’tis strange—and all remark.”

*The Corsair*, xix.

It was a bright and genial establishment, this same Newton Vicarage, for there was a large family, including six daughters, and two sons in addition to Tom. Mr. Blackburn was a clergyman of the good old school, now so rapidly becoming extinct : an excellent sportsman, well known as a brilliant shot ; not unfrequently to be seen mounted on his cob at the cover side when the hounds met ; and not without fame in the coursing world. Few could throw a fly better, and few have ever been more liked and respected in a parish. He was a county magistrate of the



best class, and could always produce a bottle of good port upon occasion. Yet withal he had his faults, and one of them was an overweening estimation of dinner; that is to say, his temper could never bear it to be late, or that the cook should have made any, the most trifling, mistake. Upon such occasions it would please him to assume the character of a martyr, and affect to be the most hardly used man in the world.

His wife, who had been a famous beauty, and who still far surpassed most younger women in that respect, was at this period chiefly at variance with the other members of the household in the super-abundance of love she felt for her last-born, a son of the usual disagreeable habits so general among little boys. But Mrs. Blackburn was in reality one of the kindest-hearted women in creation, and as a housekeeper quite unrivalled.

The eldest daughter was a pretty, English-looking girl that had already driven many love-sick swains to the verge of distraction, though she was but nineteen years old. Her name was Jessie. The next sister, Edith, promised to be rather taller and more striking-looking, but certainly not so animated. The third, Julia, was a dark beauty like her mother; and the next three, Fanny, Mabel, and Laura, were mere children, with a young ruffian of a brother some eight years old, named Jack, thrown in somewhere among them.

The family had some little while before this acquired an addition in the shape of a Mr. Jones, who was the curate and tutor for the boys, Tom included. Henry Jolliffe had been intrusted by his parents to the discipline of this gentleman, and was consequently also one of the family, except when the holidays came round.



Tom had always been one of those sort of boys who, without being in the least stupid, had from one cause or another—idleness partly, carelessness partly, and dislike for study chiefly—learned little or nothing at school, and it had been decided to try him with a private tutor at home; but the plan did not succeed, for Henry, who was somewhat of a prodigy, used to prepare all the lessons, and Tom would generally trust to him to be told anything he wanted to know. Mr. Jones, who was a Welshman, stormed in vain; Tom remained impenetrably dense or idle, no one could tell which.

Strange sports used to be the order of the day at Newton. There was on the premises a certain deaf groom, whose temper was most irascible, and whose name was Thomas. This man was possessed of prodigious strength, and also great speed, so that he was a very formidable opponent; and yet the three boys,

including little Jack, were time after time attracted irresistibly to the very dangerous pastime of "teasing Thomas," as it was called.

It probably is within the experience of most men that at school, college, or wherever they have been, there has also been some one who seemed by Nature formed to be a butt of this kind. It is impossible to say what peculiarities mark a man out as the sport of others. But when such a man is met, his fellows know him as it were by instinct. Such a man was Thomas, and his speed and strength added a spice of danger to the pursuit of him that could not but allure the British mind. Many were the hair-breadth escapes that were run, but it will suffice to mention one of the most amusing adventures.

A pea-shooter had been introduced upon the scene, and one afternoon Henry, in a spirit of devilry, took aim at Thomas, whose back was turned, and struck him on the tip of

the ear. Instantly Thomas turned about, rage depicted on every feature of his face, and without a word rushed upon Henry and Tom, who fled for their lives, but barely escaped up the granary steps, and into a pigeon-house at the side, where they had just time to bolt the door.

Thomas, in hot pursuit, hurled himself violently against the door, but it was a good one, and the two inside were able to support it against him. Then he became silent, though they could hear him walking about outside, and presently doing something to the door. They cared little, however, for they felt sure he couldn't get in, and when after a while they heard him go down the steps, they felt that he was defeated, and they might escape. Anxiously they looked out through the holes of the pigeon cote, and saw him go right away towards the vinery. Now was the time to make a rush for it. They withdraw the bolt,

seize the handle of the door, but it remains immovable ; horror-stricken, they realize that Thomas had secured it from the outside, and means to keep them prisoners till they shall have purged their contempt. Again they rush to the pigeon-holes. Saints be praised ! there is little Jack. “ Jack, hi there, quick ; come and let us out.”

It is some while before Jack can make out where the cries come from, but when he does he hastens up the granary steps, and they hear him busily engaged at the door. Very soon he opens it, and they find that a stake had been placed across from post to post, and a rope securely fastened from the door-handle to this, so that escape would have been impossible without breaking the rope or stake.

Just as they were going, an idea struck Henry to fasten the door up again as if they were still inside, and this being soon done, the

three made tracks to the school-room, which overlooked the whole scene of the previous action. Cautiously they stationed themselves so as to watch the future movements of Thomas without being seen.

It is not long before Thomas appears, bearing with him the syringe that is used in the vinery. His expression is foul and surly, and he is heard to be muttering to himself. It is evident he means mischief. He enters the stable, and comes out again with a bucket, fills it at the pump, and sets it and the syringe down by the stable wall. Then he departs, his countenance blackening every moment.

But the anxious watchers do not connect the syringe and bucket in any way with themselves. They think, rather, that, though still harbouring evil designs, Thomas is in this matter only preparing to perform some ordinary duty. But see, he is returning, bearing with him a ladder, and now his plan begins

to dawn upon them, so that they can scarce suppress their laughter.

With fixed and determined face he plants the ladder against the wall where the pigeon-holes are, and they hear him now, in murderous tones, declare, "I'll syringe ye yer jackits, ye young raggils!"

These are his words, as, grasping syringe and bucket, he ascends the ladder. And now behold him, bucket on arm, the syringe with difficulty drawn full, lay on the deadly weapon through the pigeon-hole, and discharge a death-dealing fire, hither and thither, dexterously directing it towards every corner, lest there should be chance of escape.

The exquisite humour of the thing, as time after time the syringe is charged and discharged amid the fiendish chuckles of Thomas, surpasses all powers of self-restraint that our friends can boast of. Feeling that they can bear it no longer, Tom again directs the pea-

shooter, aims carefully, and despatches the missile, which, hurtling through the air as Thomas's profile is full in view, strikes him on the nose smartly, and the three simultaneously burst into roars of laughter.

A moment more, and as the bucket and syringe fall from his palsied grasp, Thomas has turned and seen the three derisive faces. Green with rage he becomes, springs from the ladder, and looks wildly round. To him, thus rolling his frenzied gaze, there appears a cart-load of turnips just shot out on the ground.

Heedless of the result, he seizes one of these, by fortunate chance a rotten one, and poisoning it with rabid rage, hurls it whirring through the air at the three faces in the open window.

They with one accord drop down, and above their heads, harmless, the dread engine passes; yet not harmless, for the good Mr. Jones by evil chance steps into the room to stop the

noise, and full in his face the fearsome turnip flies: providentially rotten, so as to burst and fly into pieces; yet leaving him, his dignity all gone, injured, affrighted, and horribly befouled.

Let us not dwell on this scene, except to say that the boys succeeded in shielding Thomas from any ill result, taking the blame on themselves, and being, therefore, kept in to write heavy impositions for the rest of the day.



## CHAPTER III.

“And all at fiery speed the two  
Shocked—and either knight at once,  
Hurled as a stone from out of a catapult,  
Fell as if dead.”—*Gareth and Lynette.*

LIFE at Newton was not without sentiment, for Henry's sister Mary would occasionally come over from Conyers, a distance of about nine miles, and Tom adored her with all the retiring devotion that is to be found in a youth of his age. He did not—in fact, durst not—tell his love in those days, but it was manifested, nevertheless, by his assiduous and awkward politeness towards her, his utter silence when in her company, and the settled melancholy that overspread his features whenever she made her departure.

Mary was a tall, handsome girl, with dark hair and large blue eyes, not older in years than Tom, but older infinitely in experience; and she took a species of pleasure in leading him on, and watching his desperate and uncouth endeavours to render himself pleasing to her. It was whispered that she had ere now been absolutely engaged to another, at the very thought of which Tom gnashed his teeth in jealous rage, but the parents had not approved, and so it had been broken off.

Henry, with the fervid emotion of extreme youth, looked on and loved the fair Jessie, who was some seven years his senior. To him it was bliss to bask in the sunshine of her smiles, as he often did; but the bliss was sadly alloyed whenever there was a dance or anything of that kind given at the house, for then Jessie's looks were for other and older individuals, and poor Henry moped silently and sullenly in a corner, longing to acquire age.

It is ever the lot of youth to think itself held in low esteem, and to yearn for the time when, advancing years shall have entitled it to respect. But when the years have advanced, how many are there that regret the happy, careless bygone days, and look forward wearily to the future, now looming darkly !

But Henry was in the halcyon state of romantic love. To him it was sweet to read of the chivalrous deeds of the knights of old, and to wish that the present were like the past, that he might wear a lock of Jessie's hair in his helmet, and by his strong right arm overthrow all who would not admit her claims to be the Queen of Beauty.

Such were his dreams, and in such wise he spoke often to his sweet ladye, who half encouraged him to go on, being amused intensely, in reality, at his high-flown sentiments.

Tom had not the same romantic turn of

mind, and he was chiefly occupied lamenting his own stupidity in not saying something or other when he had an obvious opportunity, or treading on Mary's dress and tearing it, or spilling over her the tea that he was gracefully, as he thought, handing; whereat he would blush to the roots of his hair, and imagine that he had forfeited her esteem for ever.

Henry's desire for knightly deeds had led him to manufacture spears and wooden shields, emblazoned with heraldic devices, and he would occasionally induce Tom to engage in conflict with these weapons, only, as they had no steeds, they were obliged to charge one another on foot. The danger of the proceeding was considerable, for the spears would generally glance off the opposing shield, and at last—when Henry had nearly had his eye put out by an accident of this kind—Mrs. Blackburn sternly forbade any more martial encounters. The wounded knight became

reconciled to his fate very easily, for had he not his ladye love to tend his hurts, and sweet discourse with her during the period of his convalescence ?

But his heart panted still for the tilting-field, and a bright idea struck him when his eye fell one day on an old Bath-chair that was stowed away in a corner of the coach-house. Towards the orchard there was a lane about one hundred yards long, on a considerable slope all the way. What more easy than to start in the Bath-chair down this declivity and tilt at a ring as in the ancient days ? The matter was easily arranged, except that a ring was not forthcoming ; but a large apple hung by a string did duty equally well. Thus did the gay youths, guiding with left hand the strange conveyance, charge repeatedly down the slope ; triumphant, indeed, if they could bear the apple away on the spear's point, and lay it before the shrine of beauty.

But now other and more prosaic uses were found for the Bath-chair. Tom had discovered that it was desirable to ride in it whenever there was occasion to go anywhere, and Jack was impressed into the service, much against his will, and compelled to push Tom and Henry wheresoever they listed.

There was scarcely room for two in the chair; but one could sit on the arm, and the other in the seat, and thus they made shift to be accommodated.

It happened on an evil day that Jack had been made to push the pair as far as a house some hundreds of yards higher up the road than the Vicarage, and the journey was all on the ascent. The return journey the two idlers in the chair promised themselves would be rapid and exhilarating.

The reader must know that the village of Newton is built on a steep hill, on whose summit is the Vicarage, beyond which our

friends had now been wheeled. Below the Vicarage the principal street of the village runs right down the hill in question, and there is somewhat of a turn towards the bottom before the level ground is reached.

So then Jack set off to push his two seniors back again to their home, and they quite revelled in the ride down the few hundred yards of slope ; for it must be understood, that although the Vicarage was at the top of the steep hill, the road continued to rise gradually for a considerable distance further.

And now they are nearing the entrance gates, regretful that the pleasing journey is past ; Henry at ease in the seat, Tom on the arm of the chair, directing their way with well-skilled hand.

Jack stayed not his pace in the least.

“ Now then, you little fool, pull up, will you ! Don’t you see you are taking us right past the gates ? ” Such are the words of Tom.

“Stop, you idiot,” he now roars out ; for behold, Jack, impelled by sudden frenzy and recollection of his wrongs, with redoubled efforts rushes the old rattle-trap chair on towards the brink of the hill, so fast that it is impossible to turn it off the road, even if the affrighted Tom had sense to do so. It is too late to stay now, even if he wished, for the hill is already asserting its sway, and the machine is rushing along beyond the speed of Jack’s little legs, so that he is fain to let go his hold, and away go the ill-fated pair. Faster, faster.—People rush from their cottages to see them go by, but these seem a mere hazy mist to Tom and Henry, so awful is the speed at which they travel. Tom’s wits are all alive now, and he grasps the guiding rod steadily, with difficulty maintaining his precarious seat on the arm. On they rush, sweeping as it were into an abyss of dream-land, breathless and well-nigh blind from the



ever-increasing pace. But they are nearing the bottom of the hill. There may be safety yet.

Tom well knows the danger of that turn in the road, and nerves himself accordingly. They have reached it now. There is a lurch, which Tom manages to counteract, another lurch, on his side this time, and over they go in horrible turmoil.

They fly through the air like bolts propelled from catapults, and the chair turns a series of countless somersaults, resting at length wheels uppermost, and the said wheels spin round furiously for many more minutes.

The inhabitants of the village view with intense anxiety the prostrate forms, and there is a general sigh of relief as they are seen to rise. Jack has watched them open-mouthed until now, but as they turn their countenances up the hill towards him, and shake their fists in deadly rage, he sees that the time has come for him to fly, and behold he is gone.

Tom and Henry are seen to rub their knees and elbows painfully, and on nearer inspection they have various abrasions apparent on their hands and foreheads ; but almost by a miracle they are not seriously hurt, and with wrathful minds they turn the old chair right way up again, and ignominiously push it themselves up the village.

Jack has taken refuge in one of the leafiest of the trees in the avenue between the Vicarage gates and the stables, and, quaking, he hears the two pass by with muttered threats against himself. He leaves not his hiding-place for many hours, when the aggrieved ones, having had their hurts attended to, and generally been made much of, have recovered their tempers, and are not likely to bother themselves in the way of vengeance.

## CHAPTER IV.

“Trust me not at all, or all in all.”—*Tennyson*.

TIME passed, and the Derby day was now at hand. Few who have not lived in Yorkshire can have any idea of the interest taken by the inhabitants of all classes in everything pertaining to racing. It is not a dangerous interest, such as leads many on to ruin themselves with betting. It is no spirit of gambling that makes racing so universal a favourite in Yorkshire. It is simply the love of horses which inspires every one, whether rich or poor; and if they do bet, it is only to back their fancy, not with any restless, feverish idea of making money by mere common-place speculation.

Even in a quiet village like Newton there

was quite a stir of excitement, and few indeed of the inhabitants who could not argue at some length on the merits of the various candidates for the great event, though scarcely any had ever seen the Derby run for.

All, however, remembered the glorious days of Blink Bonny, and with universal consent the vote went forth for her son. What though Blair Athol had never yet seen a race-course ; bred as he was, he *must* be backed, if but for the sake of his dam.

Tom and Henry had been somewhat mysterious of late ; no one could exactly say in what way, but their conduct had an indescribable something about it that was not usual. They had heard from Mr. Crook that he had taken £220 to £11 for them—Blair Athol to win the Epsom Derby, and that alone was a somewhat momentous incident. Still they made no secret of this to the girls, enjoining on them, however, with many pro-

mises in case of a win, that the old people must on no account be told.

But there always seemed something lurking in the background, and the female mind is intuitively quick at noticing such a phenomenon, no matter how deftly the gross intellect of man endeavours to conceal it. And yet but one point was definitely noticeable, and that was, that for some weeks Tom and Henry had spent absolutely no money on anything whatever, and, further than that, by sundry sales of tame rabbits, and others of their 'goods and chattels, had appeared to be solely intent on amassing money.

And now the Derby week had arrived. It was Monday night, and Tom and Henry were due for their dancing lesson next day at Malton. Behold them now in Henry's room, intently occupied with something on the dressing-table, while the candle sheds a fitful, flickering light on their anxious countenances.

They are counting a sum of money nervously, carefully.

At last Tom speaks. "Ten pounds five and ninepence! Will that be enough?"

"We must make it enough; we can take return third-class tickets, and then we can't come to much harm." Thus says Henry, with the confidence of youth.

Tom seems rather doubtful. "But after all," he adds, "Blair Athol is sure to win, and then we shall be all right."

"Of course," cries Henry; "there can be no doubt about it."

And so they go to their beds, but I much doubt whether sleep found either a ready votary that night, and in the morning they appear noticeably haggard and care-worn. Mrs. Blackburn observes this, and in her kindness of heart declares that the boys have been working too hard, and that a day's holiday at home will do them good; but, to her astonish-

ment, both declare that they feel quite well, and would not like to miss their dancing lesson for anything. In fact they seem to get quite excited at the idea of such a thing. Mr. Blackburn praises their zeal in the matter, and there is no more said about it; but at the usual hour they set off for Malton, and are lost to sight, and even to thought, by the majority of the household.

But we who follow them have observed them get out of the train indeed at Malton, and notice that each carries with him now a small bag, which he had not when he walked out of the Vicarage; and, stranger far than this, we see them enter the booking-office, and very shortly take their seats in another train, which we are told is just starting for York. York is reached, and now we begin to fathom the mystery. Return tickets for London are secured, and away the young hopefuls go, bound for the great metropolis.

The fact is, as will now be seen, these wicked youths had determined to run up to town to see the Derby, be the consequences what they might, and they actually succeeded in carrying out their plan in the way described. Their great fear was lest their money should run short, as they had no idea of what it would cost them to stay at any hotel, and they actually decided during their first night in town not to put up anywhere at all, but leave their luggage at the station, and walk about, or otherwise disport themselves, till morning should appear.

Arrived at King's Cross, they proceeded to walk aimlessly away, staring about them, and standing a great chance of being run over; and it so happened that in course of time they reached the neighbourhood of Leicester Square. They had taken a scanty refreshment at the cost of some eighteen pence in a cook-shop, and were still wander-



ing on, beginning to feel rather miserable, as it was now late, and there was a feeling of desolation and solitude that weighed down their hearts among the vast numbers of strangers whom they saw.

Suddenly there came a voice from behind them. "My boys, what are you doing here?"

Chill fear struck to the vitals of the truant youths at hearing themselves thus familiarly addressed, but glancing timidly towards the speaker, they saw to their great relief that he was a stranger. He was, in fact, a somewhat venerable-looking old man, of a slightly Hebrew cast of countenance, which, however, coupled as it was with a fine white beard, did not impress the eye unfavourably, as it might have done had he been a younger man. He seemed to be a member of the clerical profession who was striving to do what good he might in the streets of London.

"My boys," he repeated, "what are you

doing here?—you so young, in this sink of iniquity!”

“Sir,” said Henry, in whom early maternal lessons had not yet lost their effect, “be sure we are not here to take part in any evil. Indeed it is but chance that has brought us to this place, for we are strangers to London, and are walking to and fro for the reason that our scanty means may not be trusted to procure for us a resting-place this night. To-morrow it is our purpose to visit the Epsom Derby, in the fixed hope that we shall see Blair Athol triumphant. If he is beaten we shall never put faith in living thing again.”

“Ah,” said the old man, “racing and wickedness, so runs the world; but faith—did you say you had faith? Oh, tell me,” turning to Tom, “have *you* faith even as a grain of mustard seed?”

Tom became confused at the question, and mumbled something about it's being time to

go, pulling out his watch to prove his words.

The stranger looked at the watch with him, interested also in the time. The watch was a good gold one.

Henry in his simple mind was revolving the last question, and his conscience seemed to urge him to answer, "I hope, sir, that the lessons of faith have not been wholly thrown away on us, but——"

"It is enough," interposed the old gentleman. "Oh that I may have found in you what I have so long sought! Come, come from hence with me to my home, where you shall rest for the night safe from all temptation. Come, I feel it my heavenly duty to see that you go not astray."

Without more he called a cab, and our friends got into it with little demur, for the idea of a night's lodging was quite good enough for them. Their new friend also took

his seat, and the three were soon rattling along, two of them knew not whither. In about ten minutes they stopped, and the old gentleman called on them to alight.

“I regret,” said he, examining an ancient purse, “I have no small change; would you, young sir, pay the cabman eighteen pence?”

Tom fumbles in his pockets, and draws forth coins, which he proceeds to inspect beneath the light of the gas.

“Take care,” said Mr. Barlow, for that the old man had given them to understand was his name, “take care you don’t give the man a sovereign for a shilling, for I observe that you are by no means so destitute as you led me to believe. There, that is right; and now, come in.”

So saying he opened the door of a somewhat ordinary looking house, one of a long row, and on the ground floor there certainly appeared to be a good deal of hilarity

and carousing, not unmixed with occasional oburgations going on. An open door showed a roomfull of tobacco-smoke, and a dishevelled-looking reprobate, staggering forward from among the company, cried out to Mr. Barlow, "Well, Moses, old boy, home at last!"

"Cease, profane reveller, cease; think of your latter end." There was a loud guffaw at this, which, however, stopped when he continued, "I have here two innocents whom I would not have polluted by your blasphemies. I take them upstairs, and do you, while there is yet time, repent." Then, turning to the boys, "Come, come with me to my rooms. I have them here because it is in scenes such as this that I feel my mission on earth to lie. And now," he continued, after he had led the wondering youths into a somewhat sparsely-furnished room, "you look faint and weary; a little of the cup that cheers is not forbidden to such as you. Polly!"

A rough sort of handmaiden appeared to his call. She did not seem to treat her superior with superabundant respect, but she nevertheless went off at once when told to bring a bottle of champagne and glasses, and presently returned, opened the bottle, and departed.

Mr. Barlow considerably pressed the greater part of the bottle upon his guests, and they, having eaten little or nothing during the day, became rapidly elated by their potations, and loud in the praises of themselves and their own skill in backing Blair Athol. Mr. Barlow listened and looked on with half wistful melancholy.

“My first impulse,” said he at last, “would be to reproach you for your discourse on such vanities as racing; but I can see the sweet purity of your hearts, and almost I am fain now to exclaim, ‘Rejoice, oh young men, in your youth.’ For me, who have seen the

wicked ways of all mankind, who have known the bright hopes of early days to bring but Dead Sea fruit, if fruit at all—for me it but remains to struggle on in my calling. No vain illusions to enliven me, no pulsations of youth's fair dream to exhilarate ; nothing before me but the impossibility of reforming my fellow-men, which, none the less, I must and ever will attempt."

Henry and Tom felt quite moved to reverent awe by the divine grief of the holy man. At last the former ventured a few commonplaces as to men's works living after them, and Tom broke in, "Forgive me, sir, but I feel as confident as I do of my own existence, that the task you speak of is not impossible to such as you."

Mr. Barlow smiled mournfully. "They have no faith," he murmured. "No, high and low, men have no faith. Oh that I had been born in the childhood of this great world of

ours, when conventionalities, and forms, and routine shams had not reduced the soul, the divine imagination of man, to torpor and miserable lethargy ; then should I have found faith where the poor pagan saw in the earth, the sky, the starry firmament, the trees, the mountains, the rivers, the sea, the awful thunder, in everything that was around him, a mighty power which in all faith he could admire and adore."

The two boys were now becoming greatly impressed by the fervour of their host, and they maintained a respectful silence.

"But," he went on, "I am neglecting your creature comforts ; you must have more wine," and without waiting to hear what they said, he summoned Polly again, and once more the Moët and Chandon sparkled in the glasses.

Tom and Henry were getting decidedly elevated, but their condition served but to



render them more romantically disposed and idealistic, while Mr. Barlow continued his theme.

“You in your trusting young hearts may deem it scarce credible, but I have failed in all my life to find faith such as once was upon the earth. It was my father, rest his soul! who urged me to the quest, and left a vast portion of his wealth with which he bade me endow the first faithful man I could find. Near half a century has gone since then, and my quest has yet been vain, while the money has accumulated I know not to what sum. Never, never have I found the man who merits the bequest. Slight indeed is the material test; but all are wrapped in their own selfish suspicions, and faith, alas! seems to be dead.”

“Mr. Barlow,” broke in Tom, who was not too far gone to catch at the idea of the bequest, “you asked me if I had faith. I believe I

have ; I believe we both have ; haven't we, Henry ?”

“ Yes, yes ; we have been brought up away from the busy haunts of men,” said Henry, somewhat incoherently, “ and are, as it were, pagans.”

Mr. Barlow remained a few moments in solemn thought. “ Oh, if it should be so,” he exclaimed at last, “ I could die in peace. I dare not hope ; still, I will put you to the test.”

“ We are ready,” said Tom, half expecting some terrible physical ordeal.

“ It is but this : to prove the existence of the abstract quality faith in your hearts, you must make an external show of it by putting faith in me. I will take your watch and chain, sir, and your breast-pin, and that ring, and I will depart for ten minutes. Suspicion may whisper that I shall never return ; faith will dispel suspicion. Faith or suspicion—which is it ?”

“Why faith, of course,” cried both. “Take the things, dear Mr. Barlow, we would never dream of suspecting you !”

“Bless you, bless you for that,” said the old man, visibly affected. “Thank Heaven that I have at length found the predestined recipients of my father’s gold !” and bearing Tom’s gold watch and chain, and Henry’s breast-pin and ring along with him, he glided from the room, still murmuring thanksgivings.

He had scarcely been gone a minute when Polly came in, and said, on seeing that Mr. Barlow was not there, “Please, sirs, would you be as kind as pay for the champagne. Missis is just shutting up, and she makes me hand over the money to her.” Then, seeing the dubious faces of the boys, “I’ll tell the old gentleman you’ve paid me, as soon as he gets back, and of course he’ll give it you.”

“Very well,” replied Tom. “How much ?”

“Twenty-four shillings, please, sir, and what you like for myself.”

It seemed a large sum, but as Mr. Barlow was to recoup it, Tom paid without a murmur, and bestowed half-a-crown on Polly for fear of being thought mean. She took it and went.

Minutes passed by, and the tenth was now progressing. It elapsed, and he came not; still a doubt never entered into the minds of the two faithful youths. But the clock ticked on, and when half-an-hour had elapsed, blank dismay began to overspread Tom's expressive features.

“I do believe,” he whispered, “it's a sell.”

“Wait awhile yet,” said Henry; “he may be ill.”

An hour has now passed, and the grey morning is beginning to dawn.

“I sha'n't stand this any longer,” cries Tom, and starting up he rings the bell. After a while Polly appears. “Where is Mr. Barlow?”

“How should I know?”

“Who *should* know but you? We want to see him at once.”

“Well,” replies Polly, “you just won’t, that’s all : and it’s about time you were turning out of here, so as I can clean up the room. You can pay me for your night’s lodging, young gents—£2 10s. a piece.”

The two swains were simply thunderstruck at the audacity of this demand, and it was some time before Tom burst out, “You insolent woman! Where is Mr. Barlow, I say? I *will* find him and my watch,” and, followed by Henry, he approaches the door where Polly stands.

She does not at the moment speak, but quietly rings a hand-bell which is standing on a small table.

Tom and Henry rush past her on to the landing, doubtful which room to attack first, when their attention is arrested by the sound

of a heavy footstep mounting the dimly-lighted stairs. Glancing down they see a man of villainous aspect with a bludgeon in his hand quietly wending his way upwards, looking back over his shoulder, apparently to see if there is any one near in that direction. In an instant it flashed across Tom's mind that this man was summoned by Polly, and that he was coming to assist in robbing them.

They might be murdered and never heard of more. He had read of such things. But luckily he has all his wits about him, and perhaps the champagne has inspired him with unusual courage. "For your life," he hurriedly whispers to Henry, "follow me, and look sharp." Then quickly though quietly he makes for the top of the stairs,—the man being by this time more than half way up them,—and, rushing down nearly headlong, almost before his opponent has time to look round, or to hear the warning cry of Polly,

Tom has planted the sole of his right foot clean on the man's head, and hurled him backwards down the steep flight of stairs. "Quick, quick," he cries to Henry, who is close at his heels, and the pair dash at break-neck speed down over the inanimate hulking body of the foe, and, reaching the front door, open the latch with wildly-agitated hands, fly into the street, and taking to their heels, run as fast and as far as they can, clean away from the place.

Whether the man was seriously injured or even killed they never knew.

## CHAPTER V.

Δεδρό νον, ἡ τρίποδος περιδόμεθον ἡ ἐλέβητος  
 "Ἰστορα δ' Ατρείδην Αγαμέμνονα θιόμεν ἄμφω  
 'Οππότεροι προσθ' ἵπποι, ἵνα γνῶῃς ἀποτίνων.

*Iliad*, xxiii. 485.

OUT of breath, exhausted, and distressed, the two gay youths at length were fain to stop. Whereabouts in London they were they knew not, and nobody is ever likely to know, for it all seemed alike to them—one confusion of streets and buildings. Strangely enough, however, they had ever since their arrival been so bent on other and, for the time, more important considerations that they had by no means surveyed the vast town with that astonishment which is so usual among country cousins. They had, indeed, regarded it from



the most matter-of-fact point of view, being intent only on their ulterior aims and objects.

Their first idea when they ceased running was to congratulate one another on their escape, though in reality Henry had very little notion what the danger had been ; their second, was rage at the loss of their jewellery, which they would have such difficulty in explaining when they got home ; and then they wondered whether the man was killed, and they might not find themselves charged with murder. Tom cast a shuddering glance over his shoulder as he saw a policeman on his beat, but was relieved to find that the officer of justice did not take any notice of him.

Henry, with the beautiful, trusting nature of youth, stoutly maintained that he believed the reverend man, their late friend, had been treacherously dealt with by the servant Polly and her confederate, robbed of the watch and

breast-pin, and perhaps murdered. Tom, who was older than his companion, said he did not think this was so. Which of them was right must be left to the discrimination of the reader.

They were well warmed by their run, but as they wandered on drowsiness began to irresistibly overcome them, and yet they could not possibly sleep, for there was no place to lie on. Presently it so happened that they walked into St. James's Park, and there in the early morning light they beheld not a few sleepers, bestowed here and there on the various seats, forgetful for the while of the cares and troubles of their unhappy lives. But our two friends were not disposed in any way to stand on ceremony. They must sleep, they cared not how; so, finding two empty seats, they laid themselves down, and were soon far away in dreamland.

They slept calmly and well, and woke when

it was broad daylight, nor knew what the time was, for their watch was gone, and they were terribly afraid they might have let the time pass by so that they would fail to reach Epsom.

But any one who has slept on a seat in the open air will know that it is at least conducive to early rising, and so it proved in this case, for it was really only about half-past seven o'clock.

They arose, stretched themselves, and looked around, feeling by no means the gay and exuberant spirits that had pervaded them the morning before. Each had a headache of the worst description; each felt stiff and cold, and each was very dirty and generally dishevelled.

They sat down moodily for awhile, and said nothing. Presently Tom broke the silence.

"I say, if ever we come to London again we must manage it better somehow."

“I don’t think I ever shall come again,” dolefully remarked Henry. “I wish we hadn’t come at all.”

“What! not to see Blair Athol run!”

“Ah, yes! that’ll be worth everything; but hadn’t we better be moving?”

And so the two disconsolate ones set off once more on their weary tramp, this time towards the water, wherein they bathed their heated brows for some time, until they actually felt better.

They mentioned breakfast, but the bare idea of it was repugnant to their feelings. Tom said he should be sick at the sight of it; so they decided not to attempt anything of the kind at present, and went in the direction of Westminster, to enquire by what means they could best reach Epsom.

Now it so happened that they fell in with a really well-disposed licensed victualler, who was taking a morning’s constitutional, and

who, when he heard their requirements, said he could put them on to the very thing. A friend of his was running a long "Break" down to the races, and would take them for six shillings each. This was better than our friends expected, and they readily agreed to go. By degrees their companion got out of them the whole history of their expedition, whereat he laughed immoderately, and insisted they should come and have breakfast with him ; indeed, he would take no denial, and as they were now feeling considerably less unhappy the two consented, with little difficulty, to accept his invitation.

He led them over Westminster Bridge, and some distance on the Surrey side of the river, till they reached his hostelry—a regular old-fashioned one, with all the concomitants of a buxom wife, pretty daughter, sporting pictures, and general air of comfort.

Tom and Henry quite took heart of grace

beneath the smiles of their fair hostess and the good-humoured chaff of the master, so that they actually found themselves able to do ample justice to the substantial breakfast placed before them, and to finish it off with tankards of good old ale.

“There, my lads,” said the landlord, “that’ll keep you on your legs. Blowed if I know what would have become of you if I hadn’t met you.”

His guests were profuse in their thanks to him for his kindness, and said they would not fail to come and see him when they returned, and if Blair Athol won they would make him a handsome recompense.

“Don’t talk about no recompenses,” said the jovial host. “I’ll just go and get a bit on Blair Athol myself, for it seems as if some fortune had brought you in my way, and I must back the horse for luck.”

By this time the lengthy conveyance in

which they were to perform the journey was ready, and standing some hundred yards off down the road ; so they were fain to bid adieu to their new friends, of whom the daughter had already attracted the admiration of the impressionable Tom, and, amid wishes for their good luck, they took their seats, and were presently driven off. It was not long before the carriage was full, the occupants being of a most motley kind, male and female, the former chiefly noticeable for their gauze veils, the latter for their flaming coloured garments.

The Road to Epsom,—the crush, the dust, the gay jests and repartees, the noise, the pea-shooters, the flour-bags,—it is the old, old story ; and is it not written year after year in the columns of the *Daily Telegraph* and divers other papers ? Far be it from us, then, to inflict an account of the journey on our readers, for others have done it so often

before that it would indeed be impossible to introduce anything original into the theme.

Suffice it, that in due time Epsom was reached, though not before our two heroes, having been struck smartly with peas, succeeded in purchasing weapons, and, thanks to their home practice, were able to retaliate with marked effect on their enemies.

No one can fail to be impressed when first coming upon the Epsom Downs on a Derby day. The vast multitude of every type of humanity spread far and wide. The hill, with its drags and carriages, and the assembly of shows, swing-boats, and other paraphernalia of a fair below; the crowded stands, and the utterly holiday look on every one's countenance, far different, at the same time, from when excited Yorkshire assembles at Doncaster, for then every man is deeply intent on the result of the big race. At Epsom, the majority in all probability never see the race



at all, and care little or nothing what wins ; being greatly led away by the other attractions, such as the pure delights of Aunt Sally, or the sensuous joy of gazing at the fat woman, one of whose capacious dresses is exposed to the public view as an advertisement.

Tom and Henry gazed open-mouthed on what they saw, being now for the first time since leaving home really struck in a heap ; but they soon recovered themselves, and proceeded to make the best of their way towards the race-course.

They had been told on the way down that the best place for them to go to was the stand opposite the winning-post, and finding that they could go there by a moderate outlay, they proceeded at once to take up their position, determined in no case to be done out of a sight of the Derby.

The time dragged wearily by while the preliminary races were run, but it came at

last, and the course was cleared for the great event.

One Derby is much like another to the casual spectator, but no one sees the general effect of it so badly as the man who has an excessive interest in one particular horse. So it was with Tom and Henry. What though others might be loud in their admiration of Scottish Chief, or swear by General Peel, though Ely the beautiful has many followers, and Cambuscan inspires confidence in his trainer's heart; these horses might as well not have existed for all the notice our boys took of them. Their eyes were but for one — Blair Athol; and when he came sweeping down the course with old Caller Ou to show him the way, they burst forth into superlative expressions of praise, and denounced as idiots those who backed anything else. There was no mistake about it, Blair Athol did look and go well; and when they saw him there were

many who, mindful of his breeding, put a bit more on the splendid son of Stockwell and Blink Bonny.

It was an anxious time while the lot were being marshalled for the start; indeed Tom declared he was afraid he must have got heart disease; but there came the cry "They're off!" and eager eyes were strained across the course, the two pair with which we are acquainted being fixed but on the green and straw belt which the good chestnut was bearing along well in the front rank.

And now Tattenham corner is reached; wonderful indeed how it is passed, so confused seem the mass of some thirty horses whirling round it. Yonder they come. There is the blaze face well up with them.

Hark to the shouts, "General Peel" wins—"Scottish Chief." Now is the tug of war. Listen to the voice of Tom suddenly bursting forth, "Well, Blair Athol wins: he walks in,

he absolutely walks in ! Hooray ! ” and as their idol passes the post an easy winner Tom and Henry, losing all self-possession, hurl their hats away into space, and shout at the top of their voices, ever and anon turning round to decry as “idiots and fools” the imaginary enemies of the pride of Malton.

And now they rush down on to the course to see him brought back, and as he passes them in all his glory Henry absolutely bursts into tears, for what reason he cannot tell. From this, however, he is soon recovered by the objurgations of Tom ; and then there comes the welcome cry of “right,” when it strikes them for the first time that they have landed a good stake of money, though indeed that is a totally secondary consideration to their minds.

But there was no more racing for them that day. They would not deign to look on anything common after what they had seen, and

so they walked away on to the hill without any definite purpose, simply feeling it necessary in their great excitement to keep moving somewhere.

Resisting in vain the importunities of fortune-tellers, "for," thought they, "our fortune is made already," they went blundering about among the wheels of carriages, tumbling over hampers, and generally getting in the way without in any manner advantaging themselves.

Suddenly a voice was heard calling to them, and they turned somewhat in dread. There up on a drag was Fred Summerton, a cousin of Tom's, a cornet in the 19th Smashers, and loud were his expressions of astonishment. "Why, what on earth are you doing here? Wonders will never cease; but come up and have a drink." Knowing that with Fred they were in no danger of being reported, the two willingly climbed on to the drag, and

were soon in the enjoyment of an excellent lunch, and becoming quite hilarious over the champagne.

Of course they could talk of nothing but Blair Athol, and the money they had won, conversation which Summerton, who had backed Scottish Chief, hardly cared about; but he was much amused by the story of their flight from home and subsequent adventures, and declared the two should drive home with them, as there was plenty of room, and he would show them a little life without any danger.

About this time a diverting incident occurred in the shape of a combat between a negro minstrel and a photographer close by their drag. What the subject of dispute was no one knew or cared, but both were very angry. The nigger, with a tiny silk hat about one inch in diameter tied jauntily on one side of his head, his body adorned with a calico

swallow-tailed coat, the tails reaching the ground, and his nether man clad in large striped inexpressibles, rushed, banjo in hand, upon the foe, who was got up entirely with a view to an appearance of respectability. Respectable or not, however, he too came on hotly to the encounter, clubbing his easel with apparently murderous intention.

The banjo became *hors de combat* at the first onset, and the nigger, defenceless, awaited his enraged assailant.

On he came with his upraised weapon, and the nigger's fate seemed sealed, when, dexterously ducking in beneath the descending blow, he smote the photographer one, two on the mouth, and between the eyes, with such right good will that he fell like a pole-axed bullock, and rolled in horrible confusion some little distance down the hill.

On arising, the man of easels refused to renew the combat, and departed on his way ;

but the nigger received many shillings from the on-lookers, to whom he had afforded a merry sport.

The return journey was certainly performed under more pleasant auspices than the morning's one ; but, saving that the excesses in the war of pea-shooters and other harmless amusements were somewhat more rife, there was very little difference in it.

Tom and Henry, whose story had now been told, became quite the lions of the party on their drag, especially among the ladies, and the adventurous youths, now that their tongues were loosed, certainly did not neglect to profit by their position.

Arrived in town, Fred Summerton took them to his rooms, and succeeded in getting them to look tolerably respectable, and they went with him and dined at his club, by this time being, in their own estimation, regular men about town.



Somewhat to their disgust, however, after dinner he said that he thought the best thing they could do was to go to bed—in fact, he felt responsible to their people for them, and should just drive them to his place again, where they could be put up for the night, and have a good sleep.

They were inclined to remonstrate at first, but Fred was firm, and at last they agreed ; nor was it long before they were sleeping the sleep of the just, wearied out with the excitements of their expedition, too wearied indeed to dream even of Blair Athol.

## CHAPTER VI.

“Discountenanced both, and discomposed :  
Love was not in their looks, . . . .  
. . . . . But apparent guilt,  
And shame, and perturbation, and despair.”

*Paradise Lost*, x. 110.

THE next morning Summerton put them into a hansom, and sent them off betimes to King's Cross, homeward bound ; and it was not long before they were proceeding swiftly on their way to the North. For a while they said nothing, and occasionally even slept, not having yet shaken off the effects of their very unusual exertions ; but as the train went on, and they felt themselves drawing nearer and nearer to Yorkshire, they began not unnaturally to think of their impending fate, and to muse

on what they could possibly say at home in excuse of their excessively heinous conduct.

“It’s no use telling lies,” decided Tom ; “we shall just have to say where we have been, and let them do their worst. After all it will be worth it, considering what we have seen, and the money we have won.”

But boldly though they affected to talk, their hearts died within them when, after changing at York, they found themselves fairly *en route* for Newton ; and it was with but a feeble appearance of gaiety that they were at length constrained to alight at the little station. Even when there, they continued to hang about, anxious to put off as long as possible the evil moment when they would have to approach and enter the Vicarage.

The station-master hailed them with surprise in his countenance, and was good enough to inform them that they had been the objects of a regular hue-and-cry all the previous day and

the present; that they had been traced up to London, where detectives had been employed at great expense to follow and find them, and that the whole household at the Vicarage were in the greatest trouble and tribulation.

It may well be judged that these remarks did not serve to reassure the perturbed youths; but they felt that there was no help for it, and so, in a decidedly sheepish manner, they set off to walk up the village and into the house.

Whether warning of their approach had been conveyed in advance of them does not appear, still it is certain that Mr. and Mrs. Blackburn, Mr. Jones, and the greater part of the family were found sitting quietly in the drawing-room, and when the two adventurers entered with shame-faced expressions they were not greeted with any surprise, or in any way addressed as if they had not come in the ordinary and usual manner. They felt inex-

pressibly uncomfortable, and did not know where on earth to bestow themselves. Henry stumbled over and tore in a disastrous manner Jessie's new dress, and Tom endeavoured to assume an air of dogged nonchalance, while he sat down in a clumsy, gawky manner on the music-stool.

Mr. Blackburn asked Henry if it was raining, but the humbled sportsman was far too confused to give him an answer, and then the party resumed the conversation which had been interrupted by the entrance of the now wretched youths. Not a smile was on any one's countenance, nor yet a frown; everybody seemed to be just as usual.

This sort of thing went on for more than an hour, and the suspense to the two returned prodigals was something which no words can explain. They scarcely dared to stir as the minutes dragged slowly on, for though the terrible unreality of the calm was intolerable

to them, yet they weakly dreaded to open the flood-gates of wrath by calling any attention to themselves, all the while feeling, however, that they would give worlds if some one would set to and give them a thorough blowing-up. Like the would-be suicide, who craves to die, and yet dares not strike the fatal blow, they longed to break the ice of reserve that surrounded them, and yet their tongues clove to the roofs of their mouths when they essayed to broach the subject.

Tom at last blurted out, "Look here, I know you think we're awful scoundrels, and that we've been up to all manner of badness, but do give a fellow a chance to explain."

Mr. Blackburn turned round. "What's that you say, Tom? I didn't catch it. Come here and tell us over again."

The countenance of Tom was indeed a study when he was thus drawn forth from his

corner and made to stand in full view of everybody.

“Well now, what is it you were telling us?”

Poor Tom essayed once or twice to speak without success, and then burst forth, “I can’t talk with you all looking at me in that way; Henry, you tell them,” and Tom fled back to his corner.

Henry, who was blushing scarlet, and his lip by this time quivering, would have made but a poor show of it, only the kind-hearted Jessie gave his hand a little squeeze, and cast on him one encouraging glance which thrilled him to the heart; so he began,—

“We have been to Epsom to see the Derby run for; it was all for Blair Athol: we wanted to see him win, and he did win; and I am sure we are very sorry, and won’t do so any more.” The eyes filled with tears despite his

efforts not to appear unmanly in the presence of Jessie.

Punishments of all kinds he could have borne without a murmur, but this was too much. Mr. Blackburn turned his head and walked towards the window, gazing, apparently wrapt in thought, upon the scenery. Perhaps it was that he was ruminating in what dread manner to punish the boys, perhaps the simple narrative he had just heard was carrying him back to his own young careless days, when from St. Peter's school at York he too had played the truant, and stolen away for more than one delicious afternoon on Knavesmire when the August Meeting came round. Such recollections as these were bright and sunny, nor had the subsequent and necessary birch left one twinge to strike his thoughts, and mar the general gladness of those times.

Yes, it was even so; he could not find it in his heart to deal with these boys as they



deserved, and he knew not what to do. Suddenly he bethought him of Mr. Jones. "Of course, he is their tutor, he must look to this; and I'll give them a lecture afterwards." Then turning quietly to the boys,—“You had better go into the school-room, where Mr. Jones will presently come to you.”

The two arose and did as they were bid, while the rest of the family only waited until they were out of hearing to burst into fits of laughter.

The girls earnestly pleaded, however, in mitigation of punishment; but Mr. Jones, whose addresses to Jessie had not been so favourably received by that young lady as he could have wished, seemed little affected by their entreaties. Consequently the female minds became irritated, not being in any way subservient to the discipline of the worthy tutor, and a free quarrel was commencing to break forth when Mrs. Blackburn interposed, and

Mr. Jones, in no very amiable frame of mind, proceeded into the school-room.

There he found his pupils sitting. "Well, boys, I hope you're ashamed of yourselves for your disgraceful conduct."

The boys muttered something unintelligibly.

"It is necessary for me," continued the good man, "first to tell you the enormity of the offence of which you have been guilty, and to point out to you the dangers of the course upon which you have entered. You have deceived us all most cruelly, you have alarmed those who care for you, you have wasted money, and have acted a lie. All this I should be disposed to forgive, or at any rate treat lightly; but, worst, far worst of all, you have given way so far to degrading passions as to visit a race-course. This is especially distressing to me, and I am sure must be to all concerned with you. I

will only hope that, as it is the beginning of this vice in your careers, so it may be the end. I trust that through ignorance you have done it,—ignorance, I mean, that every one connected with racing is a ruffian, a blackguard, and a cheat.”

This harangue seemed quite to restore the fallen spirits of the boys, though it did not apparently impress them in the way that their worthy preceptor wished.

Henry at the juncture broke in, “Please, sir, is George Crook a cheat, then?”

“How should I know, boy? but why do you ask?”

“Because, sir, he owes us £220 over Blair Athol.”

“Oh! monstrous iniquity!” fairly shrieked Mr. Jones. “Racing and betting! May you never, never receive the money is my earnest prayer! Write out for me, both of you, the *Æneid* of Virgil, and stay in every holiday till

you have done it." So saying, he stalked from the room, leaving the two somewhat aghast at the amount of the imposition, but still quite relieved at having at length, so to speak, settled the affair, and got a definite punishment to grapple with.

They now went away upstairs, and were very soon joined by the girls, who were dying with curiosity to hear their adventures and what they had really been doing. What seemed to impress the fair audience chiefly was the win of £220, and the presents which were lavishly promised to them.

Mr. Jones was "a horrid old thing," they one and all declared, and they hated him. Papa wouldn't have minded half so much if it hadn't been for him. When were they to get their £220?

The youths explained that they should send the voucher for it to-morrow, but mentioned with some apprehension that Mr. Jones had

declared all men connected with racing to be cheats.

“Oh, what can he know about it, an old fright?” cried Jessie, passing her hand lightly over Henry’s head, who was seated on a footstool at her feet. “You’ll get the money all right, Henry dear, I know.”

“Oh! Jessie, I do love you so,” whispered the youth somewhat inconsequently, to which the young lady responded with a tender little tap on her adorer’s brow, and proceeded to explain.

“I know it’s all right, because Frank Heatherbloom told me the other day he always bet with George Crook.”

Poor Henry! and was it for this that he lavished all the affection of his fresh young twelve-year-old heart? To be dashed from the seventh heaven, as it were, by the accursed name of that man, who was inferior to him in all respects, save that he was possessed of

moustaches, and about ten years older ! Well, Jessie might kill him if she liked with despair and a broken heart. He should love her for ever.

It was about 9.30 that evening when they were summoned to the study of Mr. Blackburn, who had established himself in the largest arm-chair, and assumed the aspect of judicial dignity, which was his custom when on the magistrate's bench.

"Now, my boys," said he, making the two sit down on the sofa, "I have sent for you to tell you how grieved I have been that you should have acted so unfairly towards us all, and caused us such alarm. Your mother, Tom, was seriously ill with it, and we had to call in the doctor, who said that her heart was in a very dangerous condition."

Tom drew his hand across his nose with an audible sniff.

"For you, Henry, I have more excuse, as

you are younger than Tom, who should have known better than to lead you astray; but you too knew that you were doing very wrong."

"Yes, I did; I did know it was wrong," whimpered Henry; "but I shouldn't have done it, indeed I shouldn't, if it hadn't been to see Blair Athol."

"Many people," continued Mr. Blackburn, "would call that a very poor excuse, but I myself have heard worse. I have decided not to inform your parents what you have done this time, so as to give you another chance."

"Thank you, sir; thank you," cried Henry gratefully, feeling immeasurably relieved.

"But I am in duty bound to tell you that racing is a pernicious pastime, and betting, in which I hear you have indulged, is a sure pathway to ruin. All this Mr. Jones will have told you, and I repeat it; but now I must

know what you have really done, so that all the mischief you have been in may be apparent."

Then the boys began, and told him from beginning to end the whole story; and the worthy gentleman's eyes twinkled not a little at the loss of the watch, though he affected extreme displeasure.

Then as the story went on, and the boys became more excited over the narrative of the journey from London to Epsom, he stiffened his features more than ever into rigid composure. But when in the mind's eye they had taken their position on the stand, and, ever breaking in one upon the other, described the preliminaries of the Derby, the clerical countenance began to unbend.

"Yes, Mr. Blackburn; and there were Scottish Chief and General Peel, favourites, and Ely, and Cambuscan, and heaps of others," said Henry.



“And they all paraded in front of us, and looked beautiful,” added Tom.

“No, *they* didn’t; it was Blair Athol that looked beautiful, and he came past, led by Caller Ou; and oh! you should just have seen him go; it was like ‘oil on the ocean,’ somebody said. And then the race, it made you feel as if your heart was coming right into your throat!”

So said Henry, and Tom took up the tale.

“And a lot of idiots kept shouting all sorts of things were winning; but I saw the white face coming——”

“Yes, boy, yes,” broke in his father; “go on.”

“Oh! I can’t describe it,” cried Tom. “But he came stealing along like clockwork; and Scottish Chief and General Peel, and the whole boiling of them—he squandered them all just like a lot of old donkeys; and I shouted, and Henry here shouted, and as he

passed the post we threw our hats clean away, and gave such a 'hooray' as you never heard."

"Then," interrupted Henry, "to see him looking so grand as he was led back, and all the people after him."

"It must have been fine indeed, my boys; I wish I had been there with you. Good lads, come on, we'll drink success to Blair Athol and William I'Anson." And the good divine proceeded down-stairs to bring up champagne; whispering to his wife, whom he met on the stairs, "It's no use, my dear; I knew I should spoil it all."

But as this part of our story is but introductory it behoves us to make it brief, and we will therefore not dilate on the subsequent events of that year—the astounding defeat of Blair Athol at York by the Miner, and his brilliant revenge at Doncaster, when through the blinding storm of rain he bore his colours once more gallantly to the fore, and fairly

established himself as the most popular horse that ever trod the turf of horse-loving Yorkshire.

How the £220 was received by our boys, and how it was spent, we shall not pause to relate ; but, having fairly introduced them to the reader, we shall only add that Henry the next year was sent off to Rugby, while Tom was located in a land agent's office at Malton, and so there was for a time an uninteresting severance. We shall therefore leave them for the present, and pass over some four or five years, hoping by that means to fairly launch this history into a period of continuous interest.

## CHAPTER VII.

“ Oh, mirth and innocence ! oh, milk and water !  
Ye happy mixture of more happy days !  
In these sad centuries of sin and slaughter,  
Abominable man no more allays  
His thirst with such pure beverage. No matter,  
I love you both, and both shall have my praise :  
Oh, for old Saturn’s reign of Sugar Candy !  
Meantime I drink to your return in brandy.”

*Beppo, lxxx.*

It was the summer of 1868, and we find ourselves and some in whom we are interested at the somewhat secluded sea-side town of Saltoun.

Henry and his sister Mary are there, the latter in the charge of a highly acidulated old maid, who has been imported into their family since the deaths of Mr. and Mrs. Jolliffe, which

occurred within a short time of one another some two years previously. The old maid in question was named Miss Bloomer, and her duty was simply to play propriety, which she did with really provoking assiduity.

Mr. Jolliffe had left his children in very comfortable circumstances, and so they were able to live on at the old house much in the same way as before his death ; but, unfortunately for Henry's welfare, his trustees were a somewhat useless body. Two of them lived at a distance, and only met on very rare occasions, while the third, who was more or less on the spot, was an old gentleman who was said to have once been clever and business-like, but who now had degenerated into a decidedly inane old bachelor. He had a great affection for his young ward, but no idea whatever of in any way controlling or directing him ; incapable even of detecting anything wrong when Henry demanded his fixed

monthly allowance regularly every week, and not only demanded, but also received it.

To such a pass had things gone that Master Henry, from being the quiet, good, and studious individual he at one time gave promise of, had quickly developed into a regular hare-brained youngster, recognizing no will but his own; and on the present occasion was staying away from school and visiting Saltoun simply because there was no one to send him back when the holidays came to an end. His sister Mary, it is true, expostulated with him, but to her he said he was ill, and it was necessary for his health that he should go to the sea-side. The family doctor being called in, Henry soon succeeded in convincing that worthy gentleman that he was in a very bad state indeed, and thus a certificate had been obtained and forwarded to the authorities at Rugby some months before the story re-opens and finds the wayward youth at Saltoun.

But those we have mentioned were by no means the whole of the party. There too was Lucy Fitz Roy, an old school-friend of Mary's, and the last, but not least, was Tom Blackburn.

Let no one suppose, however, that after the lapse of four years since we have last seen him, Tom, being of the same mind as then, was allured to Saltoun by the charms of his former goddess—Mary. No, he had changed all that, and seemed to regard Mary with the most brother-like affection, while she would often make merry jests at the reminiscences of what seemed to both to have been the height of youthful folly. Tom had grown amazingly since we last saw him, and was now a stalwart young man of the most orthodox British pattern. A fresh open countenance, good teeth, crisp curling light brown hair, and a general appearance of boldness, strength, and activity about him, which was indeed no mere appearance, but a striking reality, as will be

testified at some time in these pages. Tom had plodded away for a considerable time with the land-agent at Malton, and was said to be very good at the business, but an accommodating uncle had suddenly died, and enriched the whole family of Blackburns, leaving Tom himself no less a sum than £2000 a-year, so that he was pretty independent.

It was long since his fickle fancy had changed from Mary—so long, indeed, that he had had time to love and cease to love others also before the present date.

Among these was Lucy Fitz Roy, a very pretty dark-eyed girl, with a wealth of auburn hair, and a simply exquisite figure. She, much of the same nature as Tom, had also loved for a while; and when she stayed with Mary at Conyers Tom used to be constantly in attendance, while poor Henry, who had not yet attained an age that young ladies appreciate, and who, all oblivious of his early love,



Jessie, was now madly devoted to the fair Lucy, felt himself cast into the depths of jealous despondency, and would spend whole solitary days out in the fields. Upon one occasion he was even found to be sulking in a ditch, from which he refused for long to be extracted. Lucy, however, knew well how to manage affairs when she once saw what was the matter, and afterwards, by judicious glances at the enamoured youth, and the slightest apparent indications of preference, contrived to keep him more or less happy, or at any rate to prevent him from doing anything desperate.

But in no long time Tom ceased to love Lucy, and she no more cared for him. Strangely enough, Henry's attachment also came to an end about the same period, and now they were all staying together at Saltoun under the surveillance of Miss Bloomer, influenced by nothing but the most platonic feelings towards one another.

Henry, very different from Tom, seemed hardly to have grown at all in height during four years, and more than that, his figure had assumed a set appearance, which augured that he would never be a big one. He was now about seventeen years old, and had changed in every way for the better, being built in the very neatest mould,—a regular model for a horseman,—with clear cut features, black curly hair, bright expression, though at times altered by a mysterious dreamy look about his big blue eyes, which those who saw generally remembered.

Despite the precepts of Mr. Jones, he had never forgotten or given up racing, and indeed his love for it increased with years, more especially as the sons and daughters of Blair Athol now began to appear upon the scene and give a new zest to the sport, as far as he was concerned. Blair Athol, it must be remembered, was still his idol, and as time went on

the pleasing recollections of the day at Epsom seemed to gather strength and sweetness, so that the great hero of that day was continually being placed on a still more lofty pinnacle of estimation.

But Henry had not got rid of his old world ideas, and was a shy, retiring sort of youth, though Tom, who knew him best, said he had a lot in him really.

Strictly speaking, Tom, who had passed much of his time at home, was himself not very forward, as the adventures of the two at Saltoun presently proved.

They had not been long established before they discovered one night at a concert a young lady whom both declared to be beautiful, and upon enquiry they found her to be a Miss Hamilton. There was great excitement to obtain a list of visitors, and to make out her address. This done, stricken with love at first sight, the two proceeded that

very night to patrol around the mansion, or rather lodging-house, until such time as they began to feel rather cold, and that the course they were adopting was somewhat purposeless, when they returned, downcast, to their homes, confident, however, of being more successful in some way or other on the morrow.

Saltoun is on the whole a most peculiar place, having nothing to recommend it excepting perhaps a very large area of sands, which, we presume, make it attractive to children. These same sands, however, inasmuch as the town lies low, are an intolerable nuisance to the adult visitor, who finds himself choked and blinded at every turn of the street on a windy day. The bathing would indeed be good but for the fact, that the sea is almost daily filled by an influx of trippers from Puddlesbro, Brockton, and other decidedly black places.

These, having occupied the sea, may fre-

quently be observed busily engaged with pieces of soap, washing themselves therein to the best of their ability; and in good truth they generally stand much in need of the operation, for to the majority the old story would be found applicable enough, in which a tripper enjoying a bathe is reported to have said to his fellow, "Jim, thou looks varra mucky." To which the pregnant answer, "Why, yer know, *I missed t' trip last year.*"

But the result of all this is, that it is impossible to go in for saline ablutions at Saltoun with any degree of satisfaction, excepting before breakfast, and those whose books this does not suit must perforce do without it. A beautiful bathing-place, at the same time, it is, especially at low water, when the rocks are uncovered. These, branching from points of the coast some three quarters of a mile apart, extend out into the sea for about a mile, gradually nearing one another until they leave

what seems a natural harbour, though in fact accessible only to small boats.

Within these rocks the water is as smooth as a lake, and affords a delightful and comparatively safe swimming ground to those who care for it, there being no danger from under-currents or other frightful paraphernalia of the sea.

At high water it is different, for then the rocks are covered, and there is no longer immunity from peril. Few who have been there, however, will have failed to become acquainted with Mr. Skinner, the bathing-machine proprietor, who is always on the spot in business hours. This gentleman is the great life-preserver of the place ; being a most accomplished swimmer, and possessed of wonderful endurance, he has, time after time, distinguished himself by daring rescues ; and it is well to know this, for from his manner of discoursing on his prowess, and his anxiety to

have the hardness of his muscles felt, and his strength generally observed, one is rather inclined to put him down at first as somewhat of a braggart, but in reality this is not so.

In those days, with the iron trade flourishing at Puddlesbro, Saltoun was generally the rendezvous of many exceedingly wealthy persons who lived on the principle, "let us eat, drink, and be merry," without, however, imagining for a moment they would not be able to do the like next day also. Making vast incomes, they none the less spent all, not seeing—as how should they?—that the end of their golden eggs was at hand, the goose being about to fly away, perhaps never to return. Among others there was one who, in spite of the excellence of trade, never could make both ends meet. His name was Maxwell Middleton, and his opinion of himself was considerable. Girls said he was good-looking, matrons said nothing of the kind. Men scoffed at the idea.

The truth was, he had a very fair presence, spoiled only by a singularly weak mouth. This, however, he managed to completely hide by the assistance of a fine moustache, and so he passed muster in all respects. There were many tales told of him, especially concerning the reckless and almost mad manner in which he had accumulated debts—a proceeding which resulted in his being lodged for a while in York castle, where he had been an object of continued solicitude to various enamoured fair ones; and when he finally emerged, having obtained for himself the *soubriquet* of “Spend all,” he had become so very notorious as to inevitably attract the female mind at a British watering-place.

It was not long before, through a mutual friend, he was introduced to Mary Jolliffe and her friend Miss Fitz Roy, and they were vastly pleased with him; so true is it that there is nothing succeeds like notoriety, whether good



or bad ;—and, where ladies are concerned, it is by no means certain that the latter is not more attractive. The old Adam is certainly clearly shown in his daughters,—or it may be, of course, the old Eve,—for the good young man never has been and never will be a favourite among them, while the reprobate is always hankered after.

This same Maxwell Middleton was not long in making the best of his opportunities. He was devoted to music,—Lucy Fitz Roy was a great songstress,—and, this known, the step to his coming in to tea, and the exercise of vocal powers, was not difficult.

Tom and Henry of course did not like him, partly from genuine motives, and partly from a dog-in-the-manger kind of feeling that caused them to resent the idea of Lucy and Mary preferring any one else to them, although they themselves were ready enough to fall in love with countless others.

But with regard to Tom and Henry, it behoves us to return to them and their doings.

On the morning of the day after they had discovered the fair one we have already mentioned, they were abroad early parading on the sands, among the numbers of visitors, trippers, nurses, children, and others there assembled, lounging carelessly about, disturbed only by the occasional rush of a tribe of donkeys, which their respective boys were urging on to the highest rate of speed for the delectation of their motley assortment of riders.

Our two youths were gazing anxiously on all sides of them, to descry, if possible, Miss Hamilton; but for long they were unsuccessful. At last, some distance from them, they perceived a young damsel of neat figure and attractive appearance. "There she is," cried Tom, and off they set in pursuit of her. She was accompanied by a friend, who also seemed

rather a good sort, but Tom and Henry had eyes only for one. Presently they came near, and, to their no small edification, the lady as she passed shot towards them a wonderfully meaning glance, while they had been much too slow to in any way avail themselves of the opportunity thus afforded. Henry next began to express doubts, and say it wasn't Miss Hamilton at all, and Tom didn't feel quite certain; however, they went on after the two ladies, who presently turned back and repassed them, with again the same look from the wicked eyes. This kind of thing was repeated many times, and yet the foolish swains were much too shy, owing to the retired life they had led, even to put on an appropriate expression in return, until at last Tom, urged on by Henry to do something or other, recollected that among other accomplishments he could squint in the most atrocious manner. If he could not flash love-fires from his eyes, he

could at least do this ; and so he went close by the objects of solicitude the next time with optics well nigh turned round in their sockets. This produced a marked effect, as the ladies were heard and seen to laugh, and had their admirers been more adventurous it would have been quite possible to use the advantage thus obtained in complete furtherance of their interests. But the truth is, they were most shy specimens, and durst do no more ; so that, after Tom had repeatedly squinted in the above manner, the ladies apparently got tired of the proceedings, and went off homeward, leaving their admirers cursing their own cowardice on the beach. All the time they were not convinced in their own minds whether the one was Miss Hamilton or no.

After lunch they were out again, and again found their charmers, but were still irresolute, and after dinner it was the same. Not to weary the reader, I may as well say, in short,

that for the space of about three weeks did these wretched youths carry on the same game, without getting any further, in spite of the most obvious encouragement. It is true that on one occasion they borrowed a pocket-handkerchief from Mary, and Tom, having nerved himself for the desperate effort, actually took it up to the ladies and asked if either of them had lost it. They said "No," and smiled; but Tom was powerless to say or do more, and so they bowed and passed on, leaving him speechless and hopelessly stupid.

Once even it was actually determined to go and sit down on a seat where the dear ones had located themselves. This was done; but the tongues of both Tom and Henry seemed glued to the roofs of their mouths, and not a word would come saving to one another. The position indeed was one of torment, and they were absolutely glad to get away.

These proceedings will, of course, appear

sufficiently idiotic to the reader; but the narration of them will serve to show the state of advancement which has been arrived at in the characters of the two who have to play a prominent part in this book.

Later on we shall show them in very different colours. At present the only place where they seemed to be thoroughly at home was on horseback, and both were conscious of appearing to some advantage upon such occasions. Mary Jolliffe and Lucy Fitz Roy were also very fond of riding, and Maxwell Middleton, to judge from his own account, was a mighty horseman; so it was not long before that gay gentleman arranged to accompany the party on one of their expeditions. Henry said he would go and order horses, being particularly anxious to get one, that he had noticed as being inclined to buck-jumping, as a mount for Middleton, for whom he entertained feelings the reverse of friendly. He

was successful in getting the horse he wanted, and he and Tom exchanged glances of delight when they observed the cavalier mount in the most tailor-like fashion, and take up his reins in a confused bundle.

The whole party being ready, they now proceeded sedately enough down to the sands ; but when they arrived there Middleton's horse assumed an uneasy deportment, sticking up its back, and moving along at a pace something between a walk and a trot. Henry, who was riding rather behind, thought that the time was now come, and suddenly caused his horse to spring forward, as if starting for a gallop, pulling up again, however, directly.

Middleton's horse was at once seized with an emulous spirit to likewise disport itself, and, as a preliminary, gave a great buck and a kick, which shot its rider yards away into the soft sand, whence he rose in time to see the ladies

laughing at him, and his horse galloping back to the town.

Henry offered to ride and fetch the offending animal back again, but Mr. Middleton declined, saying, that the saddle was one on which no one could possibly ride, so he would wish them good afternoon, which he did, looking somewhat crest-fallen. Tom and Henry did nothing during the rest of the ride but chaff Mary and Lucy about the horsemanship of their friend, and therein somewhat defeated their own objects; for the spirit of opposition was roused in the girls, and they defended Middleton in a way they certainly would never have done had they been left to quietly ruminate over the ridiculous exhibition he had made.



## CHAPTER VIII.

“There, ye wise saints, behold your Light, your Star—  
Ye *would* be dupes and victims, and ye *are* ;  
Is it enough ? or must I, while a thrill  
Lives in your sapient bosoms, cheat you still ? ”

*Lalla Rookh.*

TIME passed on, and our two youths still continued their pursuit of the damsel they had chosen. Henry had even written poetry to her, and caused one of the donkey-boys to deliver it to her on the sands, and still, despite the evidently favourable reception of this missive, no further move was ventured on. The lady herself evidently saw that if anything was to be done she must herself do it, and at length she wrote upon the sands, with the end of her umbrella, “an introduction seek.” Eagerly did her admirers when they came up peruse

the much-prized inscription; but all they could think of to write by way of reply was, "We have sought, but found not." As a brilliant after-thought, however, one of them delineated a heart with an arrow stuck through beneath their reply.

So they passed on, and soon observed the ladies come and examine what they had written. It is difficult to imagine anything further that the gay damsels could have said by way of encouragement under the circumstances, so they drew another similar heart and passed on. To see this heart, and know therefrom that their attachment was reciprocated, was a matter of marvellous moment to Tom and Henry, who became doubly enamoured from that moment.

The same night, about half-past ten o'clock, their unquiet spirits would give them no rest, and leaving Middleton as usual, vocalizing for the edification of the women-folk, they

wandered forth to view the dwelling to which the lovely dame always betook herself, together with her companion, who was probably her sister. This house was not the one in which they had been told Miss Hamilton lived, but that was of no importance. Their informant was surely mistaken, for they had almost decided by this time that it was Miss Hamilton indeed with whom they were engaged.

Passing and repassing the house, they at length ventured to peep in where the light shone out through the chinks in the Venetian blinds. There they saw, to their great astonishment, an old obese and rubicund gentleman *tête-à-tête* with a tall pale old lady; bottles, glasses, hot water, and lemons dispersed *ad libitum* over the table, while the two aged parties in question appeared to have arrived at a state of speechless and well nigh helpless intoxication.

As they watched the lady arose, support-

ing herself by the table, yet swaying dangerously to and fro. Lifting with difficulty one hand, she pointed menacingly at her companion ; but, overpowered by the effort, she lost her balance and fell forward among the glasses on the table.

The old gentleman smiled inanely at this, rubbed his nose, and then with a thoughtful countenance emptied the contents of his glass on the head of the lady, whereat the two admiring watchers burst perforce into loud laughter. What then happened they could not tell, but there was a great crashing of glasses, and the light went out, after which presently all was still.

So they left the place which their fancy had surrounded with a halo of romance, somewhat disabused of their ethereal ideas, and promising themselves to investigate the matter more fully the next night.

After an uneventful day they betook them-

selves, according to their resolve, about eleven o'clock at night to the mysterious mansion, determined to penetrate more deeply into the secret orgies of the bibulous old couple they had seen. Indeed it was almost decided, in case they found the same state of affairs again, that they should demand admittance at the door, and, boldly greeting the aged toppers, join their carouse, in hopes that they might thereby be brought by lucky chance into communication with the adorable daughter of the house.

The moon was shining brightly, and the town was very still, the steady-going inhabitants having, as a rule, gone to their rest. No policeman's footfall broke the serene silence ; but hard by could be heard the quiet sighing of the sea as the tide came slowly creeping in.

The house in question was one of the long street which forms nearly the whole of Saltoun. It was of good size, but there was no railing

or anything to protect the bay-windows of the ground-floor from the street. Almost opposite was a small hotel—the Red Bear.

Arrived on the spot, Tom and Henry immediately proceeded to look once more into the room which the previous night had rendered so notable. To their disappointment, however, the old man was not there, and the good lady, though indeed present, and with a bottle on the table, did not appear as yet, at any rate, to have been imbibing too freely. As, with lingering curiosity, they still watched her, they were startled by the sudden advent of a man, who, however, proved to be one Jack Preston, a friend, and he was quite noisy in his questions as to what was going on. Very soon he too became silently interested in looking through the Venetian blinds. The old dame was evidently getting on good terms with herself, and was vigorously attacking the bottle.

Unfortunately, however, a gust of wind coming unexpectedly blew off Tom's hat with a good deal of violence against the window.

With the most extraordinary alacrity the lady sprang to her feet, rushed from the room to the front door, and dashed it open so quickly that Tom, who was standing on the side of the window nearest to it, had no time to pick up his hat and escape. Henry and Preston, however, succeeded in getting round to the other side of the window, where they were effectually hidden for the time being.

Tom, being thus caught, as it were, in *flagrante delicto*, with admirable presence of mind decided at once to feign drunkenness, thinking, on the one hand, it would form an excuse for his being there against the window, apparently without aim or object ; on the other, that the good house-wife might consider him a kindred spirit, and invite him in.

Henry and Preston, listening intently from

their recess, heard Tom thus addressed : “ Oh ! what is this ? what is this ? What a sorrow you are to your poor parents ! what shame and grief you have brought upon them ! ”

Tom, meanwhile, reeled to and fro before her, purposely keeping his head down so that she could not see his face. Thinking she was reading him a lecture on general principles, he replied, “ Don’t care for my parents ; say, old girl, let’s go in and have a drink. ”

Whereupon, to the unutterable astonishment of the listeners, as well as that of Tom himself, the “ old girl ” burst forth, “ Oh ! Fred, Fred, my Fred ! you’ll be the death of your poor mother, you will ; indeed you will. ”

Tom, despite his surprise, was quite sharp enough to see through the mistake, and kept his face out of sight more diligently than ever, and adopted a tone of whining contrition.

Henry and Preston could keep back no longer, so anxious were they to see the sport ;



so, having quietly crept a little way up the street, they turned and came walking back like to ordinary passers-by. Of course when they came to Tom and his supposed mother they stopped, and enquired what was the matter.

“Oh, you must know, sir,” said she, addressing Henry, “we had got him out to Australia, into a nice business, and we believed he was quite cured, and the last accounts were that he was doing so well; but you see after all *he has come back like this*,” pointing to Tom, who had withdrawn into the shadow, and was apparently propping himself against the wall.

The absurdity of the old lady’s delusion in taking Tom for her own son was too much for Henry, who burst out laughing in her face.

“Most unfeeling young man!” cried she, withering him with a glance, “if you had had to bear with him a hundredth part of what I have you would not laugh thus.”

Henry certainly felt that, as he was not supposed to know the story was anything but true, it certainly did appear a little rough on the aggrieved mother to laugh at her in this manner; so he hastened to make some lame excuse, saying that it was only the ridiculous appearance of Fred at present that had moved him, but that he sympathized with her deeply.

Further parley was cut short by the adorable one and her friend, who turned out to be her sister, coming hastily out of the house arrayed in the most pleasing of dressing-gowns, and in a general state of charming *déshabille*. Our friends never for an instant doubted but that they would see through the matter at once, but trusted that they would be alive to the fun and carry it on. So when they rushed up to Tom, and, seizing him by the hands, called him "Fred," he thought it was all sham on their part, and actually stole an arm round

one of their waists, causing apparently thereby intense astonishment. But now they were leading him, still staggering and reluctant, to the door, where stood the mother in full light of the gas.

“Come in, Fred, come in,” they cried ; but Tom, dreading discovery from the old one, drew back, broke away from them, and rushed across the road into the public house, followed by a wail of dismay from his much-pained relatives.

The mother was the first to speak or act. “I shall send Jane at once for your papa ; he is at the Red Lion,” and in she rushed to despatch the message.

Preston slipped across the road after Tom ; but Henry, who could not imagine that the girls also were deceived, remained with them—the three now standing nearly in the middle of the road. To him the two young ladies were most communicative, telling him all

about the evil propensities of their brother that they had all so hoped were reformed.

“But,” said Henry, still incredulous, “are you quite sure it *is* your brother?”

“Oh, yes!” cried they both; “and,” added the adored one, “I could tell him anywhere among a thousand.”

This was a staggerer for Henry, who could not, however, even yet conceive that the minds of three people should have arrived at such a pitch of methodical idiocy as to feel sure that a person whose face they had not been able to see was their brother, whom, up to that moment, they considered safe at the Antipodes. Just then, by a happy thought, Tom came walking out of the hotel in his proper person—upright and sober.

“Why,” said Henry, still anxious to test the reality of the mistake, “here he is, is he not?”

“Oh, *no!*” replied the elder sister, “Fred couldn’t possibly walk like that.”

Acting his part admirably, Tom walked up to the group and said, "There is such a drunken scoundrel in there, you never saw anything like it."

Then indeed did the irony of the situation become perfect, when the hitherto adorable one turned fiercely on Tom, and drawing herself up, exclaimed, "Whatever you may think, sir, if you have any gentlemanly feeling you will refrain from such observations in my presence, when I tell you that that 'drunken scoundrel' is *my brother*."

Of course there was nothing for Tom to do but to humble himself to the earth, and implore forgiveness for his inadvertent sin.

Just then, who should walk up but the father of the family, who had been called from his potations at the Red Lion, and coming grumbling along, was not a little astonished to see his daughters, sparsely clad, holding converse in the highway.

“What is this parliamentary assembly?” he enquired; to which his daughters made answer by dashing into the story of the outrageous conduct of Fred.

The old man, though pretty well “on,” was so evidently more sensible in his remarks than the rest of his family that Tom and Henry, making some excuse, thought it wise to decamp, which they did once more into the hotel, where they found Preston and the landlord, with whom they had a good laugh over the adventure.

Now at last Preston said he knew the people well enough.

“Their name’s Hamilton, isn’t it?” asked Tom.

“Hamilton! no; it’s Jones — Jones the Coroner of Puddlesbro, you know.”

And so it was not Miss Hamilton after all they had been so ardently pursuing, but Miss Jones! The shock was great, and the

revulsion of feeling violent; but Tom and Henry were not then in a state to be unduly depressed. Reflection would come with the morrow.

While the party were thus comfortably sitting in the bar-parlour a knock came. "Would Mr. Preston be good enough to go over to Mr. Jones's?" This was alarming, but there was nothing for it but to go.

The others waited expectant for his return, which took place within about half-an-hour's time.

"Well, what happened?"

"Oh," said Preston, "when I went in there were the family sitting round the table as solemn as judges; and old Jones asked me if his son was still here, and what he was doing. I thought it best to say he had been put to bed, and seemed all right for the present. 'Is he indeed?' cried the old man. 'I know him: he'll get up in the night and break all our

windows ; *he always does*. A fine bill I shall have to pay for him at the hotel too, I'll be bound.' 'Oh, poor fellow !' broke in the old woman, 'I know he's got a bad cold, for I *shouldn't have recognized his voice at all*.' Then, after a little more conversation, I bade them good night and escaped."

"Capital !" said Tom, "couldn't be better. I say, landlord, I think after that we ought to have some champagne, and put it down to Fred Jones."

The landlord laughed, but was evidently becoming puzzled as to how he should act under the circumstances, not wishing to spoil the joke, and yet unable to show that Fred Jones really was in his house.

As he feared, Mr. Jones's servant again came over, and this time asked to see him, and demanded, point blank, whether Mr. Fred Jones were in the house.

The landlord was obliged to say that the



gentleman was not there to his knowledge, and the servant went, very shortly to return, asking Mr. Preston once more to step across the road.

Somewhat in fear he set off, and again, after a short interval, returned.

The old gentleman had greeted him in high and mighty style. "What is this cock-and-bull story, sir? My son has never been in the hotel at all as you said; mind, sir, I will not be trifled with in this manner." To which Preston had replied, that he hoped Mr. Jones did not mean to cast any aspersion on himself or his friends. All he could say was, that a man who, if Mrs. Jones was to be believed, was her son, for she had so declared him in his presence, had gone and lodged himself in an apparently very drunken condition at the hotel opposite. Of course he didn't know who the man was, but had naturally concluded Mrs. Jones was a good authority on the subject.

He didn't know his (Mr. Jones's) son by sight, and didn't wish to ; but had spoken on the faith of Mrs. Jones's statement, and so on. In the event Mr. Jones apologized to Preston, and asked him to drink with them, which he declined, being glad to get away.

The gay party then dispersed to their homes ; and Mr. Jones was left in a state of pleasing certainty that he and his family had been made fools of, but, unfortunately, by some person or persons unknown.

It was long before Tom and Henry could bring themselves to regard this story as anything but a brilliant dream, for the whole thing seemed so incredible. In fact, the pig-headed obstinacy which should lead a mother to claim as her son some one whose face she cannot see, and whose voice she does not recognize,—the son being up to that moment supposed to be in Australia,—surpasses all understanding ; and would never be written

here were it not strictly true that the event *did* happen. The truth of the narrative is its only excuse ; were it a fiction it would be a clumsy one, being, as it is, so utterly on the face of it improbable.

## CHAPTER IX.

“ My love’s a child, and thou canst say  
How much his little age may be,  
For he was born the very day  
When first I set my eyes on thee.”—*Moore*.

WE must now change the scene to another house, no less a place than that wherein abode the veritable Miss Hamilton, in mistake for whom the susceptible youths had engaged in their long pursuit of Miss Jones.

The house was one of the best of those facing the sea in Slingsby, which, it may be well to mention, adjoins the old town of Saltoun, so as to be apparently one with it, though in reality far otherwise, as the rivalry between the respective inhabitants amply testifies.

The two places together do not form one

decent-sized town; and yet to such lengths of folly has their hostility carried them, that they have, since the date of the events here chronicled, set up opposition promenade piers extending far into the sea, either one of which would have been more than enough for the requirements of both places.

One thing is obvious to those who look at the two places, and that is, that the houses in Slingsby are new and fairly attractive, while those in Saltoun are ancient and savouring of fish; but our friends Tom and Henry were completely conservative, and so went in for the old place at the expense of comfort.

But let us look inside this Slingsby house, to which in imagination we have been brought. There are sitting at luncheon in gorgeous state, and waited on by obsequious liveried servants, the family of Hamilton.

Captain Hamilton comes of a good old strain, and well known in the neighbourhood

—a neat-looking little man of about fifty, and withal an obvious gentleman. Somewhat long in the nose he seems, but then so was Cicero, if one may trust the pictures of him ; and this gallant Captain is said to have done her Majesty good service more than once in past years.

But although a man may be bold, and amiable, and a gentleman, it by no means follows that he will shape himself a clever course in life ; and Captain Hamilton in his days of younger folly had taken to himself Middle. St. Ange—*née*, Jenny Hodgekinson—to wife, and she was a ballet-girl, or what is euphemistically spoken of as such.

Why the Captain had done this no one knew, —nor indeed is it ever known why any man ever makes a fool of himself in this manner, —possibly because man is weak and woman's wit is strong ; but certain it is that he might have done worse, for Jenny never gave him

an instant's anxiety after the knot was tied, except indeed as to whether or not she would be guilty of some breach of etiquette when receiving or entertaining guests. On this point indeed she always kept him on thorns ; for her experience was absolutely nil, and her mode of diction singularly devoid of aspirates in moments of excitement.

As years went on, however, with the shrewd instincts of her sex, she had learned much and improved greatly ; but as Captain Hamilton was then by no means so wealthy as the regular lot of Iron Princes of the district, Mrs Hamilton had not as yet quite gone down among them, though goodness knows there were few of them whose pedigrees would bear sifting.

She was very good-looking, and that was a point that they, or rather their wives, could not get over. She was above the middle height, fair, with good complexion and beautiful eyes, a rare figure, and a merry expression,

that always made her a favourite with the male division of her friends, and in consequence retarded her social progress.

Her daughter Kate, at the time now spoken of, was only fourteen years old, but a complete prodigy for her age, as no one would have guessed her at less than seventeen. She was a most promising beauty, with all the gay air of her mother, and a touch of refinement, leavening the whole thrown in by the father. Her features were simply perfect, indeed the eyes were terrible in their tremulous twinklings of mirth, sentiment, fun, love, and mischief. She was fair, like her mother, and her figure promised to be equally good. No wonder was it she had attracted the attention of Tom and Henry.

There were also a young brother of some eight summers, named Jack, and two small sisters, Ethel and Beatrice ; and supreme over the family, from Kate downwards, reigned Miss



Atkins the governess, who had perhaps hardly come to years sufficiently productive of discretion for her post. Indeed, it is by no means certain that Miss Kate and she had not arrived at a mutual understanding, by which the good parents might be effectually hoodwinked as to the proceedings of both or either of them.

Kate was indeed a marvellously consummate flirt, especially when her age is taken into consideration, and it would have needed a very strong hand indeed to keep her in check ; but being, as she was, rather encouraged than otherwise by Miss Atkins, it is small wonder that she was ready for almost any outrageous escapade.

It happened that on the occasion Tom and Henry had first seen her she had also noticed them ; and, whether struck by the obvious admiration expressed in the shy glances Henry kept casting on her, or liking the look of him,

or by mere chance, she took a fancy to him, and acknowledged on their return to Miss Atkins, that there was such a nice fellow there, who kept looking at her, and she was quite in love with him, and Miss Atkins must help her to get an introduction to him, and a lot more of that sort of thing.

The bliss of Henry would indeed have been great could he have heard this conversation going on inside the house, but he little dreamed of it; and the next morning, to Miss Kate's great disgust, she found herself obliged to go off on a long-promised visit to a rich uncle who lived near Arlington.

She was indeed utterly at her wits' end, for she didn't know Henry's name, so couldn't write to him; and Miss Atkins didn't know him by sight, so couldn't find out.

"Oh! do you think he will be here when I come back, Miss Atkins?" asked she.

"My dear Kate, how can I tell? Never

mind, you are sure to find some one else where you are going," replied the governess.

"Oh, no, no! I shall never find any one like him. He is just a darling!"

From this it will be seen that Henry had been idealized by the young lady's vivid imagination into all that could be desirable. Certain it is in a case like this that "absence makes the heart grow fonder"—at any rate when there is any one like Miss Atkins to make a confidante of, and to whom you may "talk up" the object of your attention into the highest realms of sentiment, and from slight beginnings weave a fancied web of love.

It is indeed probable that, but for being able to have a chat with Miss Atkinson on the subject of Henry, Kate would have gone away and forgotten all about him very soon; but as it was, her interest was now fixed, and she went, imagining herself the victim of love at first sight, and in terrible tribulation at the unfor-

fortunate duty visit which had thus crossed her cherished hopes. Her unsuspecting parents thought that her grief was due to parting with them, and highly esteemed this display of filial affection, so that she was able to exact from them a promise to let her return sooner than had originally been intended. With this slight consolation she departed, and her three weeks' absence will account for the ill success that Tom and Henry had in their quest after her during that time.

It is perhaps needless to say, that Kate Hamilton was in no way whatever like Miss Jones, and how any one could ever have made a mistake concerning them it is difficult to understand; but then, people have not always their wits about them in such matters.

On the day at which we have now arrived Kate had returned in great anxiety to find whether the beloved one was still at Saltoun, or whether he had gone and left her no trace of

his whereabouts. Miss Atkins could not tell. There was not much going on, she said : two young fellows had been making fools of themselves by following that Miss Jones about wherever she went, and were supposed to have made some row or other where she was living with her parents a night or two back. She couldn't understand how they could be so idiotic as to think anything of the girl.

“ Who are they, Miss Atkins ? do tell me ; what are they like ? ” cried Kate, instinctively, and half jealously guessing at the truth.

“ Oh, one is called Blackburn and the other Jolliffe ; they are staying with sisters and an old lady in Saltoun. Mr. Blackburn is a big, good-looking fellow enough ; but the other is young, and, besides, too small for my taste.”

“ Has he black hair and big blue eyes ? ” is the breathless query.

“ Yes, I believe he has, dear ; rather soft-looking eyes I call them.”

“Soft-looking! How dare you talk of him in that way, Miss Atkins? It is he, I know it is he!”

“Who, dear?”

“Don’t pretend you don’t know now. Where is he? Is his name Jolliffe, do you say? I like the name. I *must* see him at once. Oh, how I hate that Jones girl! He can’t surely think much of her.”

“My dear Kate, how you do run away with an idea! Mr. Jolliffe may not be the individual you took such a fancy to at all, though I must confess, on second consideration, he is attractive enough from some points of view; but I like men, you know, and this is only a boy.”

“I tell you I know it is he; and I’ll never forgive you for saying he was soft-looking, though you try to get out of it now. He’s quite old enough for me, I can tell you, though any one of *your* age is likely enough to want something older.”

“Now, Kate dear, don’t be angry ; I didn’t say *he* was soft-looking, I said his eyes were,—meaning dreamy-looking, sentimental,—you understand,” said Miss Atkins, soothingly, for she could not afford to quarrel with Kate.

“Why,” cried Kate, “if that’s what you mean, it’s just the very thing I love !”

“Of course, dear ; now there’s the luncheon-bell ; we will go out, and very likely see him, afterwards.”

So Kate and her governess went down-stairs from their secret confabulation, and Captain and Mrs. Hamilton were delighted to see their daughter so apparently overjoyed at having returned to them.

While luncheon was thus proceeding Captain Hamilton espied, walking past their house, a well-known figure. “Why, there’s Leroy !” cried he. “James, run out and tell Mr. Leroy we are here, and shall be glad to see him. Bless my soul, how people do turn up when

one least expects them!" The obsequious James did his bidding, and presently returned with a middle-sized, rather stout gentleman, with heavy moustache, and a cold, gray eye.

"Halloo, Hamilton, this is a pleasure. I beg your pardon, Mrs. Hamilton; how are you, and Kate too? I've just come down here for a week or two on business. Horrid hole, isn't it?"

"Well, it's not very gay, certainly," said Mrs. Hamilton; "but then it's so nice for the children, and we have relations near here, you know."

"Sit down and have some lunch," interposed the Captain, "and we can talk afterwards. James, another chair."

Mr. Leroy, however, anticipated James, and placed his chair by the side of Kate, and immediately began to enter into conversation with her. Kate, however, seemed very absent, and often at a loss for an answer to the most



common-place remarks, till he was fain to give her up for a while in despair.

Mr. Leroy, it is as well to mention here, was at this time about thirty-two years old. He was a solicitor by profession, but by no means confined his energies to his legitimate business, being rather inclined towards profits more rapidly accrued than by the ordinary dull routine. He had for some while been in alliance with various German-Jew Financiers, who found his legal knowledge valuable, and had figured as the solicitor of many joint stock companies that had been very profitable to all except the shareholders. Captain Hamilton he had by some means got an introduction to during the London season before last, and, being able to make himself very pleasant when he liked, he had gradually crept into the position of the Captain's family solicitor; his only reason for not speedily enriching himself from that position being, that

he had taken a strange fancy to Kate, and proposed to himself to marry her in a few years' time, and thus come in for a good share of money which he found was settled on her by her grandmother, and also have the advantage of allying himself with a well-known family.

Kate was by no means averse from the attentions of any male being, and so, for lack of better amusement, had smiled graciously on Mr. Leroy,—Frank, as she soon learned to call him,—and felt quite important over the matter; but now she had changed all that. She had something much better on hand, and “Frank” turning up at this juncture became “Mr. Leroy” once more, and positively odious to her.

He was at present engaged on behalf of his London friends in negotiating the purchase of some land in the vicinity of Puddlesbro, where ironstone was said to exist; and the ultimate object was the floating of the National Iron-

works Company Limited, of which we shall hear more anon. He was highly pleased, however, to find the Hamiltons, for he had no idea they had gone north ; and he promised himself an excellent period in which to establish his hold firmly on the impressionable Kate. In this he did not show his customary astuteness ; for any judge of the sex could have told him that a girl of fourteen, no matter how much a woman she may be in appearance, is not notably enduring in her attachments, and he who makes play with her at first is sure to be out of it in the long run.

It is quite probable Kate was already tired of the artificial attentions of this admirer, and would therefore in any case have avoided him ; but with Henry in view the matter was quite obvious. Leroy must be utterly left out in the cold.

She took an early opportunity to escape from the room with Miss Atkins ; and the

two, quickly putting on their things, slipped out of the house in alarm lest the obnoxious visitor should hear and wish to accompany them.

It was a lovely afternoon as they strolled down upon the sands. The tide was low, and multitudes of bare-legged children were disporting themselves among the rocks, sailing boats, collecting seaweed, catching crabs and sea-anemones, or otherwise indulging in wooden spade and tin-can enjoyments. Nurses sat reading novels or working upon the soft sand or ancient reversed boats, and all was peaceful, save where a Punch and Judy was performing for the edification of a motley crowd of all ages, sexes, and conditions, that stood round it on the beach.

But Kate and Miss Atkins cared for none of these things. They walked rapidly along, carefully gazing in all directions, but apparently without result.

“They probably are in their house yet,” said Miss Atkins, and the two walked on silently.

Now Miss Atkins had come to the conclusion that, as Kate was bent on attacking Henry, it would be convenient enough if she selected Tom for her amusement. He would do very well, she thought ; in fact, she did not know there was any one better in Saltoun, and then there would be the pleasure of cutting out Miss Jones.

So, then, Tom and Henry were thus predestined to be victims of the governess and her charge ; and all this while they were not very far off, quite unconscious of the honour in store for them.

As far as the governess went, of course her conduct was of hopelessly bad form ; but it is to be feared there are many like her. Kate, on the other hand, was excusable by her youth and the bad example set her ; so that the

reader must not think too hardly of her as yet. At her time of life we have most of us played the fool one way or another, and probably should have played it still more had opportunity offered and occasion invited.

Suddenly Kate uttered a half-suppressed exclamation, "There he is!" and looking quickly in the direction indicated, Miss Atkins beheld, seated on the sand against the side of one of the old boats, the two Misses Jones, for whom Tom appeared to be making prodigious sport from his place between them, while Henry was standing on the bottom of the boat, evidently shy and ill-at-ease, pretending to evince prodigious interest as to whether or not he could walk along the keel without falling. At that moment he saw Kate looking steadfastly at him, and blushed scarlet; then, in his nervousness, slipped and rolled down on the heads and backs of Tom and the ladies, causing dire confusion and dismay;

while the cause of it all was fain to pass on, bitterly reviling those horrid girls, and wondering if Henry had hurt himself, and why he had looked so confused.

Henry was in despair. He had seen the goddess whom he had taken upon himself to adore, the very idea of whom had now made him loathe Miss Jones and her sister, because his heart had been false enough to make him follow them in mistake. What a mistake! "Oh what idiots we must have been!" thought he. But the terrible thing was to have thus been seen by her with these counterfeit young ladies, to have appeared to her as the companion and admirer of these, and then to have capped all by falling off the boat in that ludicrous and ignominious fashion! He had actually heard her laugh! Was ever any one seen for the first time by the object of his affections under more disadvantageous circumstances?

Tom too, despite his present position, had

observed who it was that went past. He was much more matter-of-fact than Henry, but even he was surprised that he should ever have taken the very ordinary Miss Jones for such a beauty as Kate; and even he felt he would like to dispense with the society he had just been revelling in, since something so very superior appeared on the scene.

In fact, the pursuit of Miss Jones had proved infinitely more diverting than association with her. The climax had arrived in her capture, and the natural consequence of rapid cooling down ensued.

But to Miss Jones this was not so at all, and she was by no means disposed to retire from the position she now occupied; nay, rather, when she saw Tom looking restlessly around—in reality anxious to escape—she whispered to him to come for a walk, and the wretched Tom was obliged to go whither she listed, meeting Kate and Miss Atkins once



more as he was taken along at a rapid pace towards Maltburn.

Henry, to his disgust, was left alone with the young Miss Jones, sitting by the boat, and knew not what to do; he was indeed thoroughly out of his element, having not yet reached the age when conversation suitable for the female mind flows readily to the tongue.

But the younger Miss Jones proceeded to draw him out, by showing him a photograph she had just had taken; and Henry felt bound to ask for it, which the lady indignantly at first refused, till he waxing bolder, and she more yielding, he possessed himself of the cherished picture just at the moment Kate and her governess walked close past on their return route from behind the boat, and saw what he was doing.

Henry uttered an exclamation of astonishment, then cast an appealing look at Kate, and buried his face in his hands.

“Nasty forward girl! How could he sit there and take her photograph?” cried Kate, when they had passed on.

“Perhaps he couldn’t get away,” said Miss Atkins; “and he couldn’t help taking her photograph if she offered it, as I’ve no doubt she did. I’m sure Mr. Blackburn looked anxious to escape from the other!”

“Oh, I’m so glad you think so. I believe you are really right. Did you see what a look he gave me? Oh, those eyes, those eyes! I hate that girl.”

And now Mr. Leroy and Captain Hamilton arrived on the scene, so there was no more good to be done that day.

## CHAPTER X.

“ But since he crossed the rapid tide,  
According to the doubtful story,  
To woo,—and—Lord knows what beside,  
And swam for love as I for glory.

“ ’Twere hard to say who fared the best ;  
Sad mortals ! Thus the gods still plague you !  
He lost his labour, I my jest :  
For he was drowned, and I’ve the ague.”—*Byron*.

THE Misses Jones were now at a discount, though with difficulty avoided ; and a fresh and more exciting pursuit commenced after Kate and Miss Atkins.

There is no need to go into the little minutiae of this—how Kate smiled invitingly, and Miss Atkins glanced wickedly, or how Henry became distraught with love,—quite different this time from the last,—and Tom

fell into a pleasing doubt as to whether the budding charms of Kate or the matured graces of Miss Atkins were the more worthy of his regard.

Mr. Leroy would, so far as possible, inflict his company on the ladies, or, when snubbed beyond endurance and compelled to leave them, would prowl around within view like an evil spirit; and already his sharp eye had detected our youths, and the preference displayed towards them. Henry, who dared not attempt the feat of speaking to his goddess, by way of consolation made friends with her brother Jack, and highly entertained that urchin by treating him to donkey and pony rides on the sands, dilating to him during the intervals upon the excellence of his sister. All these things, you may be sure, Master Jack was required to retail to that young lady afterwards, and much satisfaction she derived therefrom.

But matters were growing serious. Henry had absolutely attained to a poetical frame of mind, and with much travail ejected from his brain a series of romantic verses brilliant in imagination. This was done at dead of night, and when he had written them down he showed them to Tom next morning, who had pretty much the same ideas of poetry as the elder Mr. Weller, yet was wise enough to know that women, especially young or old ones, liked that sort of thing; consequently he declared Henry had done well, and the sooner they were delivered to the lady the better.

This matter was soon arranged through the medium of a dishevelled donkey-boy, one of the tribe who had now become well acquainted with the gentlemen who were always hiring their donkeys and ponies for Jack.

It was a bright sunny morning, and Kate with her governess were sitting as secluded as

they could make themselves on one of the remotest seats near the sea wall. The frequent tripper was already disporting himself in his various ways — various, that is, in outward show, yet with the same vein of drunkenness running through all, the same desire to make every one else the victim of clownish gibes and jests. The sea is black with bathing humanity, indiscriminate of sexes.

Here you may see five women emerge with shrieks and timorous foot-dipping all from one machine, imagining, when barely ankle-deep they dash the ends of their hair in the brine, that they have taken a thorough dip, much panting and clutching at machine steps being necessary to recover from it. These invariably have secured the bathing-robcs least matching their sizes, and before long get into hopeless complications, when they venture out a little further, with the rude waves and their surging garments, whereat arise shrieks from them, and

unquenchable laughter from their chosen swains, either on the beach or bathing near at hand.

Here too you may see the stalwart John—mindful mid his ablutions that he has forgotten to order a repast—walk like a sea-god well-nigh on to the shore, and cry aloud, “Mary Ann,” and Mary Ann advance, simpering, from the crowd to where the waters come lapping up to her feet scarce five yards distant from him, and, with a feeble effort at a blush, hearkens to his behests, and hurries off to order the beefsteak and onions that his soul loves.

Others take delight to tempt the dangers of the deep otherwise, escorted by ancient fishermen in the most secure of boats. These perhaps recover from the effects of their day’s pleasure sooner than any of the rest, for the excess they have already indulged in ere long departs from them, and they have not, when they land, an affection to any further unctuous

victuals or brain-firing drink, so that in the morning they wake heartier than their fellows.

But it must not be thought these sights were any source of attraction to Tom and Henry. They but had eyes for that seat, some hundred yards away, where they beheld the ladies of their choice ; for, on mature reflection, Tom had decided to arrange the matter conveniently by leaving Kate to Henry, and himself laying siege to the heart of Miss Atkins, with whom his ripe experience told him he could expect a much more wicked sport than the other.

The Misses Jones had passed once or twice and been unnoticed, so they turned and went away in a rage, resolved to find other and more worthy admirers.

And now with strict directions and injunctions the poem, addressed to Miss Hamilton, was entrusted to the donkey-boy and sent on its way, while Tom and Henry lay on the



soft sand in feigned nonchalance, and scarce dared to look towards that seat and the approaching messenger for very fear and nervous apprehension. Indeed, when they saw the boy absolutely deliver his missive and depart Henry turned away, dreading to behold it scornfully torn and cast aside ; but Tom looked on, and declared that they were both reading it most earnestly ; so Henry gazed too, and saw the sweet Kate bending over what he had written, and this filled his heart with joy. Presently the ladies arose and walked close past where the two still lay ; and Kate, as she drew Henry's very heart out of him towards her, so ravishingly lovely did she appear, from the sunny tresses of her shapely head to the yellow sand - boots on her little feet, — this fourteen years old woman, Kate, looked on him with such love, such ill-suppressed invitation from the wondrous darting glances of her eyes, that the boy—for boy he was—stared paralysed

until she was gone, and then cursed himself for an oaf and a dullard in not having availed himself of the occasion.

Miss Atkins had looked mischief at Tom, and Tom had winked at her, such differences are there in the human race !

But now when the plot was thickening, Mr. Leroy, having spent his morning amid draft agreements to purchase the land he had come after, and many other intricate arrangements of prospectuses, engineer's reports, and computed profits, bore down upon the scene, and, exercising his privilege of acquaintance, walked off with the disappointed dames, who could hit on no scheme to rid them of his odious presence.

No more during that day was opportunity favourable, and in the evening Tom and Henry were condemned to do duty by accompanying Mary and Lucy on the sea, so as to enable "that fool of a Middleton" to make one of

the party without the presence of Miss Bloomer. The voyage was uninteresting, as there was a heavy ground swell on, and when fishing was attempted, and the long oily rollers carried the boat with slow rise and agonizing fall up and down, when this was done, I say—well, the expedition became still more uninteresting to all concerned except Henry, who was a good sailor, and who took a fiendish pleasure in seeing Middleton go through the various stages of changing colour, till with green complexion he seized an oar and rowed, violently at times, and at times feebly, all the way to shore *safely*; but, though supper awaited him and promised music, he made excuse to go home and change his coat, and was seen no more that night, except indeed that Tom declared that he descried him from the topmost window, a melancholy figure, walking alone by the sad sea-shore.

In the morning Henry received a letter

written in a big, bold hand, and when he read it the light of joy, not unmixed with mirth, broke forth on his countenance, as well it might do, for the letter ran thus :—

“If you love me, and would like a good introduction to my people, be on the beach to-morrow with a white feather in your hat, and if I see that, I shall, when I go to bathe, pretend to be drowning, and you must come and rescue me, and then they will all be so grateful to you.”

No more,—but was not this enough, in all conscience? Henry was certain who had written this letter, and the excellence of the conceit fairly carried him away till he remembered he was such an indifferent swimmer: still, the sea would be quite calm, and she probably would not go out far; anyhow he would do it, even if he drowned himself. Should he tell Tom? no, he thought not; it would be such a joke to deceive even Tom: so

he pulled a white feather out of his pillow and stuck it in his hat before going out, and Tom said he must be an idiot for doing such a thing.

This was not a "trip" day, and so it was possible for reasonable beings to bathe, though it is seldom such an opportunity occurs at Saltoun ; and down on to the beach ere long, with various paraphernalia, came Kate and Miss Atkins.

Soon they spied and were spied by our heroes, and one glance showed Kate the white feather conspicuous in Henry's hat. It was enough, and without more she vanished into a cumbrous bathing-machine, which anon was drawn creakingly out into the smooth lake-like sea.

And Henry stood and gazed at that machine as if his eyes would penetrate within it ; but he was thinking not of that, only anxiety and excitement were strangely tempering his

pleasure at the prospect, so that he even trembled as he stood, and half fancied himself afraid. "Ha! there she is!" He had drawn with Tom nearer to the shore than perhaps he ought; but then there was excuse when such an event was impending. Kate, in the daintiest costume, was speedily diving, swimming, floating, and going through all manner of evolutions, while Miss Atkins paddled about near to the machine.

And now Henry saw his beloved going further and further out, and felt that the time was coming, and looked at his boots, and thought for the first time, how on earth was he to swim all that distance with them and his clothes on! A moment's reflection, and Mr. Skinner's method, so often narrated by that hero, flashed into his mind. This was to ride one of the bathing-machine horses out to sea instead of swimming. He

looked around, and saw a life-belt with rope attached close by. A shriek from the sea, "Save me !"

"Good God !" cries Tom, "there's Miss Hamilton drowning ; help—a boat !—Where's Skinner ?" and thronging people rush aimlessly about, and women scream, and Mr. Skinner is not at hand.

But Henry has seized the life-belt, knocked the boy off the nearest horse, jumped on the old animal's back, and urged him at a rapid trot out to sea, amid the hushed and breathless silence of the spectators. Kate is a long way out, and really acts the well-nigh exhausted swimmer to perfection, and Henry is glad to find the shallow water continues for a considerable distance ; but at last the old horse goes slower and slower, and then he is afloat—a novel sensation to Henry, and indeed to most people in this country. He is now only fifty yards from his drowning

darling, and she calls to him, for they are far out of earshot of the shore, "Oh, please take care; don't bring that horse too near me, or I shall be kicked. What fun this is! Now you must throw me that belt, and hold on to the rope—stay, I had better sink first;" and down she goes, causing a deep-drawn sighing groan to arise from the gazing throng. But she has risen once more, faintly struggling, and Henry, now close by, throws her the belt, which she feebly grasps and rests on half inanimate. The excitement of the occasion is so great that Henry scarce feels the water pressing round him, nor hears the snorting of the astonished steed, nor thinks of where he is,—only that she is there; and it is well indeed for him that there are no waves, so that the horse maintains his equilibrium gallantly, and, nothing loth, at the slightest indication on his mouth turns homeward, towing his lovely burden.



How the people are cheering now ! and Henry looking back sees a merry twinkle in the eye of the seeming lifeless one. That's right,—the horse is aground once more, and pulling in the line, while he stops for a while, the gallant rescuer draws the poor damsel to him, and leaning over takes her in his arms, and lifts her across his saddle-bow, clasping her all dripping to his heart. "Come up, horse," somewhat unsentimentally he shouts, and drives the old beast, now breaking into a trot, to the shore, amid loud acclamations and heavenward-hurled hats. "Out of the way," he cries, unmindful of all this, and kicking the horse into a canter, he rides off — like Brian De Bois Gilbert with Rebecca — to the house of the Hamiltons facing the beach hard by.

And what a ride that was ! so short, so sweet ! To have got that soft, rounded form actually in his arms ! To press her to him, and to whisper

words of impassioned love, while she, with a mischievous light in her half - closed eyes, seemed to cling to him and delight to be there ! But it is over : the door is reached, and she is handed over to her distracted parents, who bear her in with the aid of James, and, all forgetful of poor Henry, shut the door and leave him there lamenting.

This was indeed unexpected, though after all very natural, for all within the house thought of nothing save the restoration to life of the fair drowned one, subjecting her confusedly to all manner of treatment prescribed on such occasions. And Henry looked at the uninviting door moodily for some while, then turned and rode back upon the sands in a rage, with the sea still dripping from his garments, and the sun beating fiercely down on his head, whose hat was now floating calmly upon the glistening sea. He had not noticed the loss of it.

Many now came round him, and said how well and bravely it had been done; and even Mr. Skinner, too truly great for jealousy, bestowed his offering of gracious praise. Old Betty the bathing-woman declared that no one would have gone out that way except for their sweetheart—"And sure they'll make a bonny pair some day."

But Henry's heart was full with the shutting of that door in his face, and he quietly dismounted and walked off, nor said ever a word to any one, till Tom joined him and cried,—

"My word, you have done a rare bit of business; you're all right now for certain."

Then Henry broke out, "All right, indeed! Didn't you see how they left me with never a word, and shut the door? They and their daughter may drown twenty times over before I'll go in after them again."

“Why, you fool!” rejoined Tom, “did you expect them to think of you before her? You were all right; and of course all they thought of at the minute was restoring her. They’ll be after you before this day is out, you’ll see.”

“Ah!” said Henry, “perhaps I’m wrong, and of course I would go in twenty times for her, in any case; but let’s go home, my head feels awfully bad somehow.”

And Tom, looking at his companion, notes that he looks very curious, and ere long has to take his arm, and then to make for a seat. “Keep up, old man, you’re all right; never go and faint.” But it is no use, Henry droops and droops, and Tom has to charter an opportune pony-carriage to carry him on to the lodgings, where, when they arrive, he lifts Henry out quite insensible.

Great was the consternation at this event, and a doctor was quickly summoned, who in

no long time pronounced that it was a sun-stroke, the result of losing the hat on that sweltering day; that Henry must be kept strictly quiet in a dark room, and not be excited in any way.

Miss Bloomer undertook the charge of him, for she had a strange, half-romantic love for the boy, and she was ably assisted by Tom; but it was more than a day before he came to himself, with a heavy throbbing weight in his head, and a pressure at the back of the skull which he could not understand, till by degrees it was all explained to him, and, by way of consolation, that Captain Hamilton had called and left the very kindest of messages, and Tom had been introduced to Kate, who was wild with grief, and desired to see her love. Henry's pale cheek flushed at this, and a happy smile played upon his features for a moment; but Miss Bloomer interposed, that it was positively necessary he should see no one, nor have any

excitement, for at least a month ; and then his much-wrought nerves gave way, he turned on his pillow and burst into childish tears of disappointment.

## CHAPTER XI.

“Accipe nunc Danaum Insidias, et crimine ab uno  
Disce omnes.”—*Virg. ‘Æn.’* ii. 65. .

WE will pass away from the Saltoun scene, leaving Henry in a precarious state, Kate distracted by what had occurred, Tom morose and barely susceptible to any charms when he walked out alone, and Middleton hanging about biding the event, and determined to go in for Mary in earnest should Henry die.

In the back parlour of Mr. John Jamieson, trainer, Malton, that worthy and Mr. Leroy were sitting. It was late in the evening, and the room was redolent with steaming glasses of whiskey. Mr. Jamieson and Mr. Leroy were sitting opposite one another by the fire,

and talking on some evidently interesting subject.

The trainer was a stout man, with a fat open countenance, and straightforward expression, but nevertheless strange stories were told of him, for all of which he had some specious defence; and from training Derby favourites, and being among the head of his profession, he had descended to a small stable at Malton, where he had a few horses of Mr. Leroy's, and other notably sharp customers.

No one seemed to know precisely what harm or wrong he had done to cause him to thus come down in the world; but then in those days certain matters were not winked at in the same fashion they are now, — such as rushing the public, through the medium of the Sporting Papers, on to brutes that never can have a ghost of a chance for the big races for which they are backed,—or stopping a horse, as a matter of course, if the



particular event for which he is started does not happen to be "his journey." This was no doubt done in past time ; but there was then a sin in being found out which does not now appear to exist, unless the culprit be a small man without noble patrons.

However it came about, Jamieson was on the down line, and association with Mr. Leroy, and need of money, had not improved his morals ; so that many events had been pulled off, to the great detriment of the public, or lost, to the equal detriment of that highly respectable body. The best horse in the stable was Bartimæus, a six-year-old, with one eye, that had done good service, winning always when wanted, and being equally accommodating if a defeat was required. The rest were miserable selling platers, some of which the public, however, persistently fastened on for every handicap in which they were entered, and so they served their turn, as the stable always

secured the public money upon such occasions, and the horses seldom if ever ran. If they did run they were invariably beaten, but the wise public shook its sagacious head, and said they were not "spinning."

The public indeed generally has some mysterious favourites of this kind, which have no doubt been sedulously put about as good things by the stable, for causes that are obvious enough ; but why people are so obstinate, and always back a horse the more the longer it is kept without winning, and are not to be driven off, goodness knows. Probably they think "this horse would never be kept in training so long if there were not a good race in him," nor dream how all this time the money of themselves and brother idiots has been flowing into the coffers of the stable.

Now Jamieson, as has been premised, had seen better days than this, and at times his soul even now rebelled at the insignificance of

the proceedings, the lack of credit, the want of self-satisfaction, and the feeling that this hawkish procedure was mean and despicable. So, blowing a cloud of smoke into the air as he took his long clay pipe from his mouth, he remarked, "Mr. Leroy, I'm thinking of cutting this game; it aint good enough."

"Nonsense, Jamieson; surely you've made a good lot in the last year; what more do you want?"

"It's not that, sir. I feel I'm lost with these horses; any stable-lad is good enough to train them, except old Bartimæus, and he's about done. I want some good stuff to work upon, sir, that's what it is."

"Well," said Leroy, replenishing his glass and growing communicative, "you mustn't think of going yet awhile. You see I've been short of capital the last year or so, or you should have had something good, and my friends have been in the same boat as myself;

but I will say, no one could have made a lot of worthless brutes pay better than you have done : why, there are plenty of your modern trainers, with first class horses, haven't made half the money ! ”

A gratified smile stole over the trainer's features ; he loved to hear himself exalted at the expense of younger men.

“ But,” said he, “ do you see your way to anything better ? ”

“ Yes, I'm glad to say I do, as the matter I have in hand is very likely to come off, and then my friends and I will clear ninety thousand pounds.”

“ My eye ! ” cried Jamieson, “ we can do some good then ; but how will you get this money ? ”

“ Well, let me see, how can I make you understand ? You know what a Joint Stock Company is, don't you ? ”

“ Yes, of course.”

“Has it ever struck you that somebody must get up joint stock companies, at some trouble, else they wouldn't exist?”

“Why, I never thought about it: but no doubt some one has it to do.”

“And you agree that those who put the thing into shape have a right to be paid for their work and trouble?”

“Certainly.”

“Well, we are getting up, or what they call ‘floating,’ the National Iron Works Company, Limited, and we are to be paid £90,000 for doing it.”

“By George, Mr. Leroy! but they're open-handed people, whoever they are, in that Company. How did you manage to get them to stand so much?”

“Oh! I see you're very green in these matters. My dear sir, the Company has no say in the matter at all. I see you don't understand, so I'll explain it to you.

“I find the land where ironstone is supposed to be, near Middlesbro, and I get it under offer at a certain price—a hundred thousand. I report to my friends that all is right, and then I arrange with the proprietor that we shall make a company to buy his land, and he shall be one of the first directors.

“The price to be asked the Company is a hundred and ninety thousand, and I make an agreement with him, that ninety thousand of that goes to me and my friends.”

“Yes, yes,” said Jamieson; “but how do you get the Company to buy it at that price?”

“Oh! that’s easy enough. I bring down a surveyor and an engineer or two that I know, and they make first-class reports of the property. Seven of my friends, or their clerks, sign for a share a-piece in the Company, and so we get it registered. Before that, one of us has agreed, as trustee for the Company, to buy the property for the sum asked; and then

when we are registered we have the seller, and two or three others whom we put in as directors, and they adopt the purchase : so it is settled.

“ After that we flash advertisements and prospectuses about among all the clergymen, old maiden ladies with limited incomes, and other idiots, telling them how they will get twenty per cent. for their money ; and they tumble to it at once, and take all the shares. I assure you the thing is as good as over. I have arranged everything right.”

“ Well,” said Jamieson, “ that is a rum game ; but it’s much the same thing as you and me quarrelled with Jack Barstow about when we sent him to buy old Bartimæus, and Job Skelton offered the horse to him at six hundred guineas, but Jack made him ask us seven hundred, and give him the extra hundred when we paid. You were terribly riled when you found that out, Mr. Leroy.”

“ Oh, yes, of course ; but a private trans-

action like that is very different from dealing with the public."

"Ay, I suppose that's it; but I wish you could do something for me now, sir. Couldn't you get hold of some young gentleman with plenty of money who could send me some horses?"

"I've been thinking of that," replied Leroy, "and I fancy I've spotted one, if not two, at Saltoun now; but I shall be able to tell you more when I go back there. They've all the necessary money between them, that's certain, and I feel confident good may be made out of them."

"Well, Mr. Leroy, you're the strangest gentleman I ever saw—always an eye open for everything."

"Of course; how else can one live in these days? But it's getting late, and we've drunk quite plenty, so I'm off to bed;" and this pleasing specimen of a lawyer departed placidly



to his hotel, leaving his trainer wrapped in meditation.

It was perfectly true that he had arranged to his own satisfaction the scheme which he had explained to Jamieson.

Sir Irving Allix, M.P., was in difficulties, and happened to own a piece of land near Puddlesbro, which might or might not contain ironstone. He had no means of developing it, at any rate, and there appeared a great chance of his having to sell it at what might turn out to be far below its value. It had so chanced he was recommended to consult Leroy about his financial affairs ; and that astute individual, well knowing the rage of people for anything connected with iron in those days, saw at once how the matter might be turned to account.

Sir Irving Allix was a well-meaning, but by no means sharp-witted, individual, and he readily agreed that the promoter's profits

should form part of the purchase-money he was to charge the Company for the property.

“For,” said Leroy, “it will cost us a lot to float this Company to buy your land, and we can only look to you to pay us for the trouble and risk ; but then, of course, you must get the money you pay us from the Company. That’s only fair.”

“But,” urged Sir Irving, “the Company may not feel disposed to pay so large a sum for ironstone.”

“You never fear that. There’s no occasion to tell them what they pay. If I get reports from competent men that the property is well bought at a hundred and ninety thousand, that’s all the Company want to know. The Company have no business with you and me ; and whether you have all the money for yourself, or whether you hand over part of it to me, is no concern of theirs.”

“No, of course not,” said Sir Irving; “I understand you now.”

“Very good; but as there are always a lot of meddlesome busy-bodies about, trying to put a spoke in the wheel of everything with which they have nothing to do, you take care and not talk about this. You have made this agreement to hand over ninety thousand to my friends and myself; well, let that be between ourselves, there is no need to mention it.”

“That seems reasonable enough,” replied the baronet, now becoming bewildered; “but I really don’t understand these things, so I am sure I had better leave myself entirely in your hands. I am quite willing to be chairman of the Company, as you ask me.”

“That’s right; you’ll have £500 a-year for it, and little to do. The only necessary thing now is for you to transfer the property to my friend Mr. Lazareff, who will act as

trustee for the Company until it is formed. He will agree to give £190,000, at certain specified intervals, and then you and the other directors, as soon as the Company is registered, will adopt his contract. I'll take care you have a board that won't make any objection to it. We must have some working capital, I suppose ; so we'll make the first issue of shares for £250,000. That'll be about the mark, I should think."

Sir Irving had some while back given up all attempt to follow the intricacies of Mr. Leroy's plan ; but, having a child-like confidence that it was all right, he did just as he was bid, and the affair was settled.

Leroy set to work at once on the preliminaries, and all seemed favourable to his pulling off a big thing at last. He had calculated that about £5000 was the limit of what the promotion could cost, and his friends were ready with that sum ; so that if the Company

only floated, as it was sure to do, they would make £85,000 nett profit.

He was obliged to stay a considerable time at Saltoun getting all matters of detail, such as reports, &c., into order; and it was only as a brief holiday that he had taken a journey over to Malton to see the horses.

He had persuaded Captain Hamilton already to take a seat at the board, knowing well that his name would look well, and also that he was much too idle to take any active interest in the Company's proceedings. The other directors he left for his friends in London to select.

Such was the promising scheme which was prepared for the benefit of the British public; and such the men that were to act in a fiduciary capacity for the as yet unformed Company.

## CHAPTER XII.

“ A horse ! a horse ! my kingdom for a horse ! ”

*Richard III.*

FOR four or five weeks Henry was not allowed to stir out of the house ; and though Miss Bloomer read Waverley Novels innumerable to him, yet, inasmuch as she never permitted any one else to see him in the day time, he felt the hours drag very heavily. Unfortunately, Tom fell ill, followed shortly by Mary, and then the maid Betsy became similarly afflicted.

What was the matter with them no one ever knew ; but the Doctor said it was low fever, and there must be a drain or something wrong in the house, which latter remark is more than probable.

Only Lucy and Miss Bloomer remained in any way fit to get about. The household consequently became a most melancholy one ; but the time passed, and all the patients were convalescent, Henry having gone through a long course of leeches on the temples, blisters on the back of the neck, hot bottles to the feet, medicines styled “febrifuges” by the doctor, ice on the head, food consisting of oysters, and drink of champagne in sparing doses.

All this was now over, and it remained only to regain strength, which was rapidly done by an increasing appetite, and the superior vital powers of youth. There is nothing so delicious as the return to strength, which is valued so much the more by comparison with what we have so lately been. We never know the worth of anything till we lose, or run a chance of losing, it. No child values its home until it has been sent to school ; and the person

who has never known a day's illness has no idea how great a blessing health really is.

But the time of convalescence has additional charms. The languor left on us by the ordeal through which we have gone is, in its way, delightful; then there is the enjoyment of life-renovating food—enjoyment which is very far apart from that of the merely sensual glutton, but the true and honest outcome of the demands of reviving nature; and, above all, there is the prospect opening once more so brightly out of darkness, that all seems to be happy, and sunshiny, and gay, in the dawning future.

And Henry during this while dreamed a wonderful dream, continuing it night by night in proper sequence; but it is too long to set out here, only it may be mentioned, that it thrilled with the wildest adventures, and amused with the most ludicrous catastrophes all who heard it.



Indeed, there was the greatest excitement every morning to hear Henry's dream, and the greatest care taken lest he should be wakened while dreaming.

It may be stated, however, that he himself and Kate Hamilton always figured conspicuously in it, sometimes to his entire satisfaction, sometimes in a way that he could not understand, especially in the last chapter of it, when he thought he stood by a beautiful palace in the night time, whence came dreamy delightful strains of music, and lights shone, and all seemed alive with happiness and mirth. He drew nearer, and folding windows opened out upon the lawn where he stood, and disclosed to him a scene of Eastern magnificence, drawn no doubt from his imagination, that had been strongly imbued with 'Lalla Rookh,' his then favourite poem. And he could hear or observe that everywhere else there was feasting and jollity; but in this

room was Kate alone, gauzily attired, reclining on a couch of exquisite workmanship ; and as he stared she saw him, and stretched out her lovely rounded arms, and whispered in a voice that roused all the fires within his heart, " Come, darling, come."

Henry made a step forward, and paused. He seemed to himself to know that he was bound, so far as *duty* went, to cross a long bleak moor, that stretched far, far away into the darkness from near the palace walls. But he thought, " Why *should* I wander over there ? How do I know that it *is* my duty ? Perhaps it is all a mistake ; I know nothing definite about it, only a sort of feeling."

Then from the palace the music came clearer, wafted to him on the voluptuous air, and Kate, to his fevered imagination, grew more and more alluring and more divinely fair, and he could hear sweet voices, whose words and sounds stole upon him and drew him on, still

half uneasily glancing at the barren waste to which he *felt* that he ought rather to turn.

## SONG.

“Come, here is love and never-ending joy,  
And here is sweet oblivion of care,—  
No worldly woes thy gladness to alloy,—  
All toil and misery thou leavest there.  
Thy love before thee,  
Behold, is waiting :  
Let bliss steal o’er thee,  
All else abating.

“Come, here is rest, and freshly-blooming charms,  
And fire that waxes and not wanes with age ;  
Here peaceful stay, locked in thy loved one’s arms,  
Nor with the world thy weary conflict wage.  
Turn then to pleasure,  
List,—we invite thee,—  
And, thy own treasure,  
She shall requite thee.”

Henry was giving way rapidly now, indeed it is not too much to say he *had* given way, and was moving forward into the romantic palace of love, when the sound of a horse’s hoofs broke upon his ears, and he paused.

What should come cantering up but Blair Athol, proud and magnificent, ready saddled and bridled! He stopped quietly and stood by Henry, into whose mind there now rushed the conflicting desire to spring on to the back of the horse he so much loved, and ride him across that moor just for the sake of riding him. That, thought he, will indeed be combining duty with pleasure; and with one more look at Kate, now rapidly growing less attractive in his eyes, he mounted the mighty chestnut, and went sweeping away over the dark and barren waste, fairly revelling in the smooth elastic stride of the horse, and the knowledge that he was mounted on Blair Athol. .

All this seemed ridiculous and fantastic enough when Henry narrated it next morning, but subsequent events certainly imparted to it an apparent meaning.

The time came at last when the invalids

went tottering forth, to find, alas! the whole place changed. The faces they loved to look on were gone, and the winds were beginning to blow cold upon the depopulated beach.

They were very weakly as yet, and their knees gave beneath their attenuated frames when they essayed to walk down the slope from the sea-wall. They could but progress a few hundred yards and then longed for a seat, which they saw close by; but it was standing in the shade, and they were minded to convey it into the lingering warmth of the summer's sun. The seat was a light one, such as a boy could easily have carried, but Tom and Henry vainly strove, so weak were they, and were giving it up in despair, when who should come up but Leroy, who asked to be allowed to help them? They felt grateful for his assistance, and he took the opportunity of making their acquaintance, while they felt drawn towards him now, as being a link

between them and the family of Hamilton. He commiserated with them on their weak condition, chatted pleasantly on racing and other congenial topics, and by degrees so ingratiated himself with them, that the intimacy thus begun was continued and confirmed, and Leroy was introduced to Miss Bloomer and the girls, so that he was now on a footing to commence his confidential proposals.

He very soon saw that Henry, at any rate, was ripe for a speculation on the turf; but he somewhat mistook the motives that were at work in his young friend. He himself could not understand racing or race-horses in any other light than as a means to an end—and that end money. The idea of any one having a sentimental love for a particular horse, or a passion for the sport itself without any of its adventitious allurements, was to him beyond comprehension, though he had seen writing to that effect.

He had spent much time in recommending Jamieson as a trainer; and as the youths grew stronger, and able to sit up at night, charmed them by anecdotes of that gentleman, interspersed with bits of rare turf lore, such as would have delighted even the "Druid." Tom was always a wary bird with money; but Henry was young, had an unlimited supply, and was beginning to feel more and more what a pleasure it would be to run horses of his own.

"But then, I will only have Blair Athols," said he, thinking aloud.

"Why only Blair Athols?" asked Leroy, in whose rooms they were sitting late one evening.

"Because Blair Athol is the best horse we ever had, and I mean to stick to him and his stock always."

Leroy smiled incredulously. "Would you two like to go over to Malton with me to-

morrow and see the horses?" The two fairly jumped at the offer, and it was settled they should start early, telegraphing to Jamieson to keep the horses in till they arrived. "I'll show you something worth looking at; though I'm sorry to say my business matters are now so pressing, I shall have to sell them all before long."

"Are there any Blair Athols among them?" asked Henry.

"No; but they are good horses."

"Oh! but I shouldn't care to win with anything that wasn't by Blair Athol."

"What nonsense!" broke in Leroy. "Blackburn, you must teach him better than that, or he'll never do any good."

"I believe Blair Athol's stock will be first rate," replied Tom; "but that's no reason of course why we should despise others."

"Of course not. Anyhow, we start to-



morrow morning at 7.30, and you shall see some real good ones."

Tom ruminated. "I know," he continued, "you have a good horse called Bartimæus, but the others haven't done much."

"No, my boy ; they are 'dark' as yet. The time *will* come—but I mustn't tell even you ; only I don't mind letting you know I have a three-year-old that can beat Bartimæus at 7lbs. What think you of that ?"

"Why, it's good enough to win the Leger !" cried Tom.

"I know that : so I think we may conclude the horse will win some day. However, it's no use talking now. I, for one, can't get up early if we stay up late ; so don't mind my asking you to go."

Tom and Henry went home in high spirits at the prospect of their next day, and pondering wakefully during the night, Henry decided that he would indeed have some horses, and

let Jamieson, the much-skilled, train them ; but he felt it as a matter of superstitious duty that the first he owned must be a Blair Athol ; and suddenly he bethought him of a two-year-old filly by that horse that belonged to a farmer near Northallerton, and had run on several occasions, home-trained, and as fat as a bull. The filly was a good-looking one, and rarely bred, her dam being by Lanercost, grandam by Touchstone, great-grandam by Whisker. Here was a rare combination of the Darley Arabian.

Now this filly had last run in a selling race, and no one had claimed her at £50. She was about last then, and her owner was now known to be somewhat hard up. Henry came to the conclusion he could secure the filly by sending a cheque for £100 for her ; and also that, under the superior treatment of Jamieson, she would likely enough make a good one.

It is doubtful if he ever went to sleep at

all that night. Anyhow he was up preternaturally early, and communicated his resolve to Tom, who approved of it ; and so the cheque was drawn, and the letter enclosing it, by way of offer for the filly, was despatched before they went off to the station.

At the station they found Leroy, who at first looked slightly annoyed when he heard Henry had commenced purchasing in extraneous quarters ; but he soon saw that this would in no way interfere with his game, so entered with interest into all the details about the filly. After a full account, he quite agreed that Jamieson would probably be able to develope something really good out of her ; “ but,” said he, “ of course you’ll need something to gallop her with, and as I am selling off, I don’t know what you’ll do if Bartimæus and all the good ones go out of the stable.”

This remark gave Henry occasion to ponder over it most of the way to Malton, so that

Tom and Leroy had the conversation pretty much to themselves.

In due time they arrived at the station, and as they were waiting to have their tickets collected, Henry at length broke silence. "How much shall you be asking for Bartimæus, Mr Leroy?"

"Oh! well, he should be cheap enough to any one at three thousand guineas. I sha'n't take less than that for him."

Henry relapsed into silence at this, for though he had well-nigh made up his mind to purchase the horse, he had thought five hundred guineas would be a sufficient sum to enable him to do so. He expected he could screw that amount out of his guardian with little difficulty; but three thousand was out of the question.

Leroy, quick in reading expression, saw what was passing in his mind, and added: "Of course, selling horses for prices like

that, one doesn't ask for money down, or anything of that sort, with people one knows. If you are thinking of buying a few you musn't go paying for them all at once, for it is totally unnecessary, and they soon win the money themselves. Not one man in twenty of those that own race-horses can afford to do without credit."

Henry began to like the appearance of things much better, and took an opportunity to speak aside in the station with Tom about what he contemplated. Tom advised him to wait yet awhile, at any rate; and presently they were driven up to Jamieson's house.

Jamieson came out with beaming, honest countenance to meet them; his wife clean and tidy, smilingly respectable, in the rear, and the air of comfort inside the dwelling impressed our two youths most favourably. Not less were they impressed by the goodly breakfast that awaited them, replete with all the fresh

delicacies from the farm, to which they and Leroy did ample justice; while Jamieson chatted pleasantly, yet deferentially, with them, branching off into topics of entrancing interest to any one who really cares for anecdotes of ancient and worthy horses. Leroy soon told him how Henry had bought the Blair Athol filly to put under his charge, at which he expressed himself much pleased.

“See that picture there,” said he, “of Cormorant, winner of the Leger, trained by me. Why that horse was bought just the same way as you’re getting this filly! My dear, just put us out the bottles and some water, while the horses are being got ready. Irish whiskey, Mr. Jolliffe? Mr. Blackburn, sir, what will you have? Nay, nay, that’s only a thimbleful. Teetotal again, Mr. Leroy? I’m sorry to hear it. Well, gentlemen, I bought Cormorant for Lord Dunnington, and every one said I must be a fool,

for the horse hadn't shown any form at all. But, bless you! I could see how that was—his feet had been allowed to get into a shocking bad state, so that he went like an old woman in pattens. But I soon got that right, and brought him out for the Champagne at Doncaster. We got a lot of money on him, and he won anyhow. We laid him by for the Derby, and I backed him myself to win £20,000. Lord Dunnington, he stood to win £100,000 on him, and altogether he was a very bad horse for the ring. Now Tom Jones was to ride him, and before the race I got three anonymous letters, warning me not to put Jones up. I showed them to his lordship, but her ladyship had a great fancy for Jones, and wouldn't hear of any one else having the mount; so it had to be so. Now, sir, I don't like to say anything against any one, but the way the book-makers peppered that horse before the day was a caution, and it

was plain something must be wrong. Well, I told Tom not to hurry him at the start, but to let him have plenty of time to get into his stride, as he was such a big one. The horse was as quiet as a sheep, and a child could hold him ; but that Bill Tomlinson—I believe he was in the swim—went and made twenty false starts with a brute he was riding, and what should Jones do but jump my horse off first every time, and let him go right away ever so far before he pulled him up.

“You can imagine what I felt like, sir, watching this from where I was, just at the back of Lord Dunnington’s box. I couldn’t bear it, and broke out to some extent against Tom Jones, and Lady Dunnington, she turned and looked quite angry with me ; but they were off at last, and there did Jones send Cormorant away in front from the very start. ‘That d——d scoundrel is trying to burst our horse,’ I shouted ; and so he was, I have no



doubt; but he didn't know how good the horse was, for when he rode him in his trial I made him believe he had seven pounds less up than he really had.

“ Well, to make a long story short, he came ramming along, expecting every moment to have got to the bottom of Cormorant; but he got nearer and nearer home, and still the horse did not stop, and Jones was no doubt in a regular blue funk now, for the people would see if he deliberately stopped him. Just past the bell Leopold, the favourite, made his effort; but it seemed as if he couldn't possibly get up, till Jones, who had kept still till fifty yards from home, sat down and just pulled Cormorant out of his stride with one jag at his head. I never saw anything done more cleverly, for he ran an awful risk of being seen, and it must have been in desperation at the last he attempted it. But nothing was ever said about it, only that he had finished nervously. Even

then I thought we had won ; but the judge said not. And now, gentlemen, the horses have gone on, and if you please we'll drive after them."

The party were very soon located in Jamieson's pony-carriage, and were carried away on to Langton Wold, as fast as the lethargic old cob could be induced to travel.

It was late in the day for horses to do their work, and so they found they had it pretty much to themselves, which was all the more pleasant, and they were able to give their undivided attention to Jamieson's horses, which was just what Leroy wanted.

The string, mustering only nine, were walking quietly about, and, at a signal from Jamieson, the boys rode up and paraded round him and his visitors. Being set off with neat, clean-looking clothing, the horses made a very respectable show; and Tom, as well as Henry, was much struck with the appearance

of Bartimæus — a powerful weight-carrying chestnut, with a queer old-fashioned look about his Roman nose, and his tail cut short like a hunter's. There were one or two other good-looking horses enough, and the light middles or bad shoulders of the rest were sufficiently hid by the clothing.

“There's a two-year-old filly there, Miriam, by Newminster, that has never run yet: she's always been unlucky in going amiss just as she was fit, but she will do a rare good thing some day,” said Leroy. “I wouldn't change her for any other at Malton.”

Henry and Tom gazed with rapt interest, and perpetual questions, which sometimes Jamieson, sometimes Leroy, answered; until at last the latter said,

“You're a nice light weight, Jolliffe; would you like a ride on Bartimæus?”

Henry's eyes sparkled with delight at the idea. “Indeed I should, if you are

quite sure you don't mind trusting him with me."

"Oh, don't think anything of that; he can take care of himself, and I know you can ride. Blackburn, you're sadly too big, but you must be put up on something. Here, Joe, get down off old Jezabel; she'll carry you all right, and you'll never have had such a mount in your life."

Jamieson was looking very surly at this extraordinary interference with his horses, and was about to expostulate, when Leroy stopped him with a frown and a wink, then took an opportunity to whisper, "The young one will buy Bartimæus to a certainty after he has ridden him, perhaps all the others as well. You'll stand in with me, of course."

The trainer remained silent thereupon, but hardly looked satisfied.

Meanwhile, Tom and Henry, who were already well primed with whiskey, had suc-

ceeded in getting the stirrups to their liking, and mounting their respective steeds.

Bartimæus was as quiet as a sheep, but Jezabel was much disposed to rid herself of her new incumbrance. Tom, however, could ride well enough, and so had no difficulty in reducing her to reason.

“Now then,” said Jamieson, “just walk gently back up there, and then bring them along for a mile three parts speed;”—this to the boy who was to lead them. “Mr. Jolliffe, you’ll follow him second; Mr. Blackburn, you had better go last, or that mare will very likely bolt if she hears anything behind her.”

Accordingly they walked off, and Henry felt quite delighted with the whole thing; it was such a grand thing to be riding a horse like Bartimæus. The boys appeared to be grinning to one another at him and Tom; but what did that matter? Tom certainly did look very large and cumbrous on the weedy

old mare ; but Bartimæus seemed so powerful, so muscular, and his movements so elastic and springy, it was really worth anything to be on his back. And now the time was come for the gallop, and the leader went rattling away, followed by Henry and the rest, whipped in by Tom with Jezabel yawing and pulling to get to the front. Three parts speed it might be, thought Henry ; but he certainly had never gone so fast, or anything like it. It was really beautiful to feel the fresh air rustling past, and the exquisite smoothness of the horse's stride. Bartimæus might be handled by an infant, and Henry, who was a nice neat horse-man, fairly revelled in his gallop ; so that when they pulled up, and with flushed cheeks and a bit of fire now in his eyes he rode up to Leroy and Jamieson, he had resolved to make the horse his own.

“ Capital ! ” shouted Leroy ; “ you and the horse seem made for one another.”

And Henry, dismounting, said straight out, "Well, if you'll sell him to me on the terms you said, I'll buy him."

Leroy was overjoyed at this success, but did not show a sign of it outwardly, and rather expressed regret now it came to the point to part with the horse.

"However," said he, "I suppose I must, and I'm sure you'll appreciate him better than any one I know."

So it was settled.

Now Leroy had purposed selling others of his lot to Henry ; but Jamieson had some little honest feeling left, and also wanted some fresh ones into his stable ; so when he saw what Leroy was after, he frankly told him that he should not allow Henry to buy any of them, except Bartimæus, without objecting.

This conversation had been carried on while the gallop was proceeding ; and though Leroy was angry at first, he dared not quarrel with

his trainer, so yielded with the best grace he could.

Jamieson was determined Henry should spend his money, if at all, on something that would do *him* credit, and was not by any means satisfied even with the sale of Bartimæus. "For you know, Mr. Leroy," he argued, "the horse is not worth five hundred guineas. He is six years old, gets weighted out of all the handicaps, and is not good enough for cups; however, he is a good honest horse, and I may pick up another race or two with him for the young gentleman before long."

Much more whiskey was drunk on the return of the party to the trainer's house, and long and earnest was the confabulation of Tom and Henry with him on the subject of the new purchase; and at intervals between his remarks on the prospects of Bartimæus he contrived to edge in suggestions about cheap yearlings to be picked up at Doncaster, and



the way future Derby winners had gone begging there, until Henry and even Tom became quite smitten with the desire to thus coin money by the aid of Jamieson's experienced judgment.

Leroy, being satisfied with his day, was very amiable, and when it was train time the two young ones declared they had never spent a more pleasant morning.

They arrived at Saltoun in due course, and Henry handed Leroy a cheque for £500, and was thereafter initiated by that worthy into the mysteries of accepting various bills for the balance of £2500—"merely as a matter of form." Thus was Henry started on a turf career.

## CHAPTER VIII.

“With a hi ho, Chivy!—  
Hark forward!”—*Old Song.*

“See my brave pack : now to the head they press,  
Jostling in close array, then, more diffuse,  
Obliquely wheel, while from their opening mouths  
The vollied thunder breaks.”—*Somerville.*

TIME has again passed on. The Blair Athol filly has been some while in Jamieson's hands. Saltoun has been deserted, and Henry with his sister are now staying at the old Newton vicarage, where several of Tom's sisters have grown out into fair and comely maidens since we last saw them.

Bartimæus has been well beaten, both in the Ebar Handicap and the York Cup, for both of which events Henry insisted on backing him,

despite the entreaties of his trainer, and was of course disappointed at the result ; but was comforted by the reflection that the horse would get better into the spring handicaps now.

As for the filly, it was judged best not to attempt to prepare her for any race at present, but get her fit for the beginning of next season, when, owing to the bad form she had shown, she would be very leniently treated by the handicappers.

Two yearlings bought at Doncaster had been added to the string. They were selected by Jamieson, with a proviso that he was to buy Blair Athols, if possible, and it so happened he was able to do so to his entire satisfaction. They were both colts, and certainly seemed a great bargain at three hundred guineas for the two.

Kate Hamilton had been unable to endure a complete absence from her love for very

long, and had devised the expedient of starting a correspondence, nominally from her brother Jack, to whom Henry replied, treating at great length on that young gentleman's sister; and thus things were being carried on at the present time—Jack's letters gradually resolving themselves into nothing but messages from Kate, and Henry's into messages to her.

It was now the hunting season, and great sport was going on in the neighbourhood with the various packs that came within easy distance of the village of Newton.

Both Henry and Tom, it is perhaps unnecessary to mention, were very keen after this manner of sport, and they had a few real good nags in the stables which had now been added to the ancient tumble-down and cowhouse-looking arrangements that for many years had served the needs of the good Vicar. Mary Jolliffe also affected hunting, and was the possessor of one of the cleverest little horses

ever seen, so that she was able always to show a bold front in the fastest runs, riding with that recklessness which seems natural to women.

A very merry party they were at the Vicarage. Henry and Mary had found life at their old house with Miss Bloomer hopelessly dull, and the result was, they made overtures to Mr. Blackburn, who was very happy to arrange matters with them ; and so they came to live in his house, which was a completely successful settlement of the difficulty, especially so far as Henry was concerned, for he had been there before, as we have heard, under Mr. Jones.

The deaf man Thomas was still in Mr. Blackburn's service, though the sport of teasing him had grown out of date. He had occasionally an opportunity of paying out his old tormentors, and never neglected to avail himself of it. In this way he had especially

distinguished himself, when the girls had bribed him a short while back to secretly release a badger which Henry had become so nefarious as to keep at the abode of a sporting old woodcutter in the village. The said badger was very large and fierce, and the few interviews he had with the fox-terriers did not incommode him greatly, so that he had not been living a very bad sort of life. The girls, however, said it was brutally cruel; hence the mission of Thomas, who at daybreak stole to the badger's house, and after that the badger was seen no more. It was said he had escaped. Tom and Henry scoured the country with dogs for several days; the girls laughed to themselves; Thomas pocketed his reward.

Not for some years afterwards did it transpire that Thomas, in pursuance of his intention to turn the animal down in the open fields, had caught it by the tail, and thus proceeded to carry it at arm's length to the

place where he proposed to release it, some hundred yards or so away. A badger is an awkward brute to carry, even by the tail, as it can curl up so as to very nearly bite your hand; and whether this one had alarmed Thomas into partially dropping it, or whether its weight caused him to flag in his efforts to keep it at arm's length, will never be known; certain it is, he suffered its head to come into all too dangerous proximity, insomuch that it was enabled to reach round and just snap him in the thigh. A badger's bite is eminently painful; Thomas was uncommonly passionate, and so he incontinently dashed that badger against the trunk of a tree so that it died. After that he buried it, put some oils on his leg, told the fair bribers that his task was done, and was paid accordingly.

But not to digress, we must go on to say that it was now an evening near Christmas time, and Henry had been very nearly a year

away from school. "Not that it matters," said he, "for now I am in the sixth form, and we never change places there, but just go up as fellows leave who are above us; so I shall be nearly head of the school when I go back."

"I've been thinking," said Tom, paying no attention to Henry's remark, "as to-morrow is Christmas Eve, we should have a day something out of the common. How would it be to go out with Jack Parker and the Sinnington?"

"Isn't it a horrid, bad, hilly country?"

"No, not about Nunnington, where they meet to-morrow. I really think we ought to go; it will be a change."

"All right," said Henry; "I'll ride Skittles then. She's clever enough for anything wherever we go. Mary, you had best stop at home, I should think."

"And why, pray?" broke in Mary, who had been looking abstractedly at an album



wherein was the photograph of the inane Middleton.

“Oh, it’ll be too rough for ladies, won’t it, Tom?”

Tom agreed, and Mary was unceremoniously relegated into the stay-at-home division for the next day.

Up betimes in the morning, the two sportsmen breakfasted, and set off by train with their horses to Nunnington. They arrived safely in due course; and amid the gaping wonderment of various assembled yokels, who were not much accustomed to the sight of red coats coming by train, they superintended the unboxing of their steeds, and were presently mounted, and jogging on to the place where the meet was to be.

It is a strange country in the main, this Sinnington,—at least to the modern generation,—placed as it is rather outside the pale of improved farming, and therefore abounding in

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vast old ragged fences, such as used to tear the coat-tails off our hard-riding fathers in days gone by.

There is something truly alluring about one of these old-world hedges, as distinguished from the neat-trimmed stake and bound of the present time. There is a savour of sport pervading it, perhaps from the feeling that when the birds are wild, and the cover all gone, a spot like this would surely attract them, and the worthy spaniel would spring them for you by degrees, so that you would obtain a rare bag; while in the new country men would toil, and fire long shots in vain. Even the bustling little terrier can make merry with the rabbits here, and bolt them for you, or run them to ground, when, if you choose, you can call in the wily ferret to your aid. Then as you go on you will surely encounter the well-fatted hare, and indeed you will spend a thoroughly enjoyable day—that is, if

you can appreciate such matters, and have not been spoiled by “drives” and “battues.”

But the Sinnington fences are not the only peculiarity of the country, for wild though they are, they yet do not prevent the portion of it around Nunnington from being very good going, and flat withal ; but when you get into the hills, then indeed, unless you are to the manner born, you will be astonished and perplexed, half desirous, if you are young, to get off and proceed in safety on foot.

These hills get wilder and more difficult for the ordinary horseman as you proceed—here and there well-nigh precipitous over away past Helmsley ; but the natives think nothing of it, mounted on their rough horses or active ponies, while you tremble for your neck, or find that, having come out without a breast-plate, your saddle slips back on to the horse’s tail as he is making his supreme effort to land you up some dangerous ascent. It is positively

awful to see Jack Parker shove his horse along down these terrible places, with the most utter disregard of all chances of a fall ; not even looking, to all appearance, where he is going, but bent solely on his business, with his eye on the irregular pack, who are ascending with plentiful music the opposite side of the "gill."

But as to Jack Parker it is necessary to say something. He is the facsimile of the immortal James Pigg, both in appearance and manner. The same hard, weather-beaten countenance, the same sandy hair, the same eyes twinkling with wonderful dry wit, somewhat tall and heavy for a huntsman, but for all that one of the sort that "nivver gits off."

In those days Jack had all his hounds "at walk" among the various farmers of the district, as there were no regular kennels, and it used to be most interesting to see them all dispersing this way and that to their respective homes when the day was over. A

sufficient subscription was maintained to pay Jack, and enable him to keep two horses,—he never had more,—and he had to make shift as best he could to obtain volunteer “whips” from among the young farmers.

At no time of the year was he idle. He would even engage himself in August to go off on to the moors, and play the keeper—a proceeding that would, I should say, fairly horrify most of our modern huntsmen. Jack did it, notwithstanding, and was in great request, being a clever man with dogs, and very entertaining withal to any party with whom he was out. At times his love of sport would break out in badger-hunting; and rare fun it used to be, on a moonlight night, pursuing the rampant “brock” with terriers, and running him into the sack prepared for his reception at the mouth of his earth.

Jack would occasionally deign to come down into the York and Ainsty, or Lord Middleton’s

country, and have a day on his own account; never being able, however, to rid himself of the idea that men who were got up so neatly could not be up to much. On one occasion, which is well remembered, when the hounds were at fault near Raskelf, and the worthy master of the York and Ainsty was about trying a small larch plantation to the left of where Jack was stationed, he, Jack, pointing to a bit of cover on the right of him, opened his mouth and spoke: "Coom back, man! *t'thing 'at you're looking for 's geün doon there.*" This was said with great disdain, and an expression as if a York and Ainsty *fox* were wholly unworthy of the name.

But to return to the day in question. Everything seemed favourable for sport, though a long delay was necessitated by Lord Never-sham, who, though not even nominally the master, was the principal subscriber to the hounds, and had to be treated with deference,

no matter how exasperating his late hours made him to those who arrived in time.

There were some thirty mounted men at the meet, including those who bestrode ponies and donkeys, the majority being farmers with rough unkempt young horses, that might develop into something some day ; while there were a few business-like old sportsmen, who looked as though they meant to see the fun, though they might not be able to go any great pace.

Jack Parker helped the time to pass more lightly by his rough quips and cranks, especially on this occasion taking Tom and Henry for his butts, and prophesying how he would show “ them York chaps a think or two ” before the day was over.

At last, about twelve o'clock, there was a relieved cry of “ Here he comes ; ” and sure enough Lord Neversham came gaily cantering up, attended by his hopeful heir, Lord Tillersley,

with two men who might have been second horsemen, but were really destined for much heavier work.

Every one tried to look as if they had not been inwardly cursing his lordship for more than an hour, and he, after a casual remark that he feared he was rather late, seemed to think no more about it.

A strange pack did the Sinnington appear in those days to any one who scanned them as we may be supposed to do, now trotting along to cover; very irregular were they, strange in colour, running most, however, to the light mealy shades, such as you see little of in fashionable packs, though to my mind usually associated with sterling qualifications. Some there were throaty in the extreme, and “dew-lapped like Thessalian bulls,” others clean cut and light-timbered. One—a York and Ainsty hound—ran mute, and withal ran to such purpose that he always far outstripped the



rest, and had been known to kill single-handed. There had been many doubts as to how to deal with this hound ; but his nose was so undeniably good that he was of great service at times, and in his case Mr. Jorrocks' advice was taken, "Be to his faults a little blind, and to his virtues ever kind."

Some one had at length happily suggested that he should be weighted so as to reduce his pace, and this was carried out at length with such nicety, that he was adjusted by sundry bags of shot attached to his neck exactly to required speed. It then became necessary only to give him a voice, but no scheme had been devised to perfect him in this particular.

Whatever the appearance of these hounds was, however, they certainly were most undeniable for their stoutness and perseverance ; while long habits of self-reliance, gained on the many occasions when they had to make out their fox where no huntsman could get near

them, had taught them to cast themselves in a manner that their more fashionable brethren might do well to imitate, instead of throwing up their heads and looking for assistance as soon as ever there is a difficulty.

But behold them now just flashing into cover, and see them, as it were, twinkling among the trees, the busy sterns betokening the keen desire for sport. Old Jack's face beams as he watches and encourages them with rather more than necessary clamour. Lord Neversham has come to a small rail that he must needs surmount, and is pouring forth curses to the empty air, because the two men whom he has brought out for *this very purpose* are not there to pull it down for him. They arrive in due course, having lagged behind on the supposition some one will stand treat at the wayside hotel, and now, as they canter up wiping their mouths, they encounter a torrent of wordy wrath from his lordship; but they

seem used to it, and quietly pull the rail out with unperturbed countenances, while their dread Lord passes on.

Presently Henry comes upon Lord Neversham behind a hedge applying himself diligently to a large flask — a rather strange performance, considering the day has but just begun ; and that Henry thought so his face must have showed, for Lord Neversham remarked by way of explanation : “ Ah ! when you get to my age you’ll find it necessary to take some jumping-powder before starting.” Henry hardly knew what to say under the circumstances, though he admired the frankness with which the explanation was given, especially as he knew that Lord Neversham had been a really good man across country once in his day. The result was he mumbled some meaningless common - place, smiled as though it was a good joke, and passed on, feeling rather ashamed of himself than otherwise.

This little incident had somewhat diverted his attention for a while, when suddenly a whimper from the cover (it was Seamer Wood), rapidly developing into a burst of music, recalled him to himself, and he was all alert, as was the good little mare Skittles.

An instant's glance showed him the hounds bustling along straight through the wood directly away from him, while Tom and the rest of the field were scuttling round the wood on the left, Jack Parker alone having taken the right side, and thus being widely separated from them. The hounds were hanging to the left, and it certainly appeared that Jack must be out of it for once in a way; but Henry decided in a moment to follow him, and chance it.

This he did at best pace, and presently came up with him. Jack was fairly rolling about in his saddle with chuckling and

laughing, the hounds all the time seeming to be clean away in an opposite direction.

Henry made some hasty enquiry as to which way they should go.

“You coom wi’ me,” said Jack, “Ah’ll put ye right; neän o’ them other chaps ’ll get aboon half a mile.” And thereat he chuckled and laughed as before, evidently hugely delighted at the impending discomfiture of the field, who had thought their line better than his.

There was nothing for it but blind confidence, so Henry followed along a bridle-path in a direction quite opposite to what seemed the right one, until suddenly they came to the railway, just where there was a level crossing.

“See that?” said Jack, pointing out the line extending far into the distance, and taking the form of an embankment all the way with high stiff rails at the bottom on either side.

“Them chaps ’ll have to loup yon railroäd, Ah reckon, or else coom back here.”

Henry of course saw the whole thing now, and pushed on after Jack over the crossing, never, however, thinking that they had not gone far out of their way, no matter how necessarily, and expecting they would now probably have a long and fruitless ride of discovery in search of the hounds.

Jack, however, set his horse going at best pace along the road which turned up from the crossing, and Henry followed at a judicious interval to keep clear of the stones that the great chestnut sent whizzing back.

They had not gone three quarters of a mile when Jack pulled up, and to Henry’s amazement, admiration, and delight, beckoned him on with one hand while he pointed forward with the other, and yelled in boisterous joy, “*Yonder they gan.*” Yes, sure enough there they were even now about to cross the road

some three hundred yards in advance, running at best pace and *all by themselves*.

It then became apparent how valuable was the knowledge of the country old Jack possessed, which enabled him to nick in with the pack in this excellent manner, and Henry felt overjoyed at his own luck in having chosen the better part, and avoided the line by which all the rest had gone and become evidently pounded.

“Hoick forrard, forrard there,” roared Jack. “Coom on, lad, coom on ; stick to me, and Ah’ll show ye what sport means,” and away he went, ramming his old horse across the ridge and furrow, having left the road by a friendly gate. The hounds were racing along a field ahead at a pace which would have been good for any country, and though it could hardly be said a sheet would have covered them, still they were very well together, all things considered.

Henry settled himself down to follow his leader, judging this to be his best cause after the experience he had had of those who went their own way and suffered accordingly. Skittles was a sweet little mare and a fast one too, so that there was no difficulty on that score in keeping within easy distance of Jack ; the only question was, what wild feats it might be necessary to perform on the route. Even now Henry saw him sit down, and drive his horse at best pace at a lowish stake and bound fence in a way that showed he evidently apprehended mischief on the other side. The big chestnut made a mighty effort, and floundered about with his hind legs a good deal on landing before getting away. Jack actually deigned to look round, and sang out cheerily, "*It's nowt* ; send her at it." Nor did he cease to watch till Henry and Skittles were safely over the obstacle, as big and ugly a looking "*stell*" as can be found in a day's march.



There was no time, however, to think of such matters. The pace was, if anything, improving, and the hounds began to show a very considerable tail. Henry and Jack pounded on after them, the country being rare going and the fences very negotiable.

“Forrard on there, ye slinking devils,” shouted Jack, cutting at the laggards of the pack, whom they had now caught up. “My eyes, sir, but this ’ll show you what’s what.”

Henry was thoroughly enjoying himself. To any one who has only hunted among hundreds of his fellows, the sensation of being “away” with one companion only is very novel, and I venture to think the man who has experienced it will for ever look back to it as a red-letter day in his annals of sport.

But Jack’s chestnut was not absolutely infallible, and he blundered over some stiff rails that came in the way—rolling over and over, and crumpling up his rider in most

formidable fashion. Henry pulled up in some apprehension.

“Gan on, lad, gan on wi’ ye,” roared Jack, shaking himself free of his horse. “Never mind me; stick to ’em, *Ah’s all reet*,” and so he was, though it would have taken many men weeks to get over such a fall.

Thus they slipped along for a good twenty minutes, to a small larch plantation which extended over an opposing hill or bank. Here there was a not unacceptable delay as the hounds went bustling among the undergrowth up the ascent, followed by Jack and Henry, the latter finding vast difficulty in keeping his head clear of the trees; but this difficulty was enormously increased when, having reached the top, the “wild huntsman” urged his career in most break-neck fashion down the other side, where the trees grew very thick and the descent was very steep. But, despite the hounds driving him hard and close,

the fox had had too much of the open to take to it again in a hurry, and it was soon manifest he was "back," by some cunning wile or other. Up the hill again perforce they went, Jack calling out to Henry to put the hounds to him, and when that gay youth could but ill effect such an exploit, being almost wholly occupied in keeping clear of the trees, he heard the uncomplimentary remark muttered in front, "Rot him, he's ne mair use than a lass i' frocks." So then they clattered backwards and forwards in this bit of cover, and wasted time, and lost temper.

Jack's horse once more coming to grief, and this time rolling right on to him and lying there, while he, so far from being concerned in the matter, continued calling to his hounds, "Yut in there, Ravager," &c., &c., as if nothing had happened, Henry managed to get the old horse pulled up, and Jack, after shaking himself, calmly remounted.

Just then many of the field, having at length found out the way, came up with much noise and clattering, inclined of course to underrate the whole performance. However, as if he had but waited for them, the fox took upon himself to slip away again. A loud "Tally-ho" from an enthusiastic yokel proclaimed his departure, and his now augmented pursuers settled themselves to the chase.

Henry saw a gate handy on to the road close by, which led direct for the point where the hounds were making towards, and he hurried through it, closely followed by Lord Neversham, and preceded by a trowsered man on a white horse, who made frantic endeavours to stimulate the somewhat obese animal to excessive speed.

Suddenly, while they were thus rattling along, the white horse, for some mysterious reason, took upon itself to fall headlong to the earth, hurling its unhappy rider violently

upon the hard macadamized road, and nearly upsetting Lord Neversham, who was following close in its wake. Henry and his lordship pulled up, while the trowsered one slowly arose, rubbing his knees, clasping his elbows, and evidently in dire pain. Henry was about to anxiously enquire whether he was hurt, when Lord Neversham, who had been seriously alarmed by the danger that had threatened him, broke out, "D—n you, man! you did that on purpose! You did it on purpose to throw me down. *I* know your ways. Go home at once, and be d——d to you. Take your beastly horse away, and if ever you dare to throw him down before me again in that way, I'll have you committed for trial; I will, so help me God!"

The poor man was too bewildered to say anything, and with a withering glance of rage Lord Neversham cantered on.

Henry too made the best of his way

forward, on seeing the man was not materially injured, not a little amazed at the idea of any one being supposed capable of selecting such a very unselfish way to injure his lordship.

The hounds were making straight for Gilling Wood, and scarcely getting way enough on to stop the bold Reynard before he reached that point of security. Still, it was evidently going to be a near touch. And when at last they actually ran through the village, with all the inhabitants yelling out, "He's only just afore you ; gan on, Jack, and you'll sartainlie kill him," the excitement became very intense.

"This way," cries the village butcher, leading them on through a fold-yard into a long pasture-field some three-quarters of a mile from the wood. "Shove 'em on, Jack ; he's dead beat. Yonder he is," pointing to the fox dragging wearily along just a field ahead.

Out comes Jack's horn, and the hounds fly to him as he takes his horse short by the head

and crams him forward at his best remaining speed down the long pasture. The rest follow; but lo ! Jack pulls up short.

“What’s the matter ?” cry several voices.

“Dang me, if that arn’t ower much of a good thing,” says he ; and indeed it appears so, for they are fronted by an absolutely impervious bullfinch, one solitary gap in which is fenced to the height of six feet by the most solid-looking rails.

“Oh ! we’ll never stop now,” cries Lord Tillersley, and without a moment’s hesitation he rides at the formidable rails.

“Stop him, stop him ! he’ll be killed !” yells his agonized parent. “Will nobody stop him ? Damn those men of mine ; where are they ?” But of course nobody interposes, and the youngster’s horse clears the rails without touching them.

Henry knows his mare is a wonder at timber, so he must needs have it too, and just

lands after hitting it somewhat heavily behind. He looks back, and sees, with perhaps a justifiable feeling of triumph, that Jack Parker has dismounted and is pulling down the top rail. This is enough. Forward is the word; and as he enters the very last field before the Gilling Wood, together with Lord Tillersley, the hounds are just running into their fox, who dies with the haven of refuge before his eyes. The rest very soon come up, and the day is now at an end.

“Perhaps not a wonderful run, but a rare enjoyable one,” thinks Henry, as he jogs homeward. “I wonder where on earth Tom is; I’ve never seen him since the hounds first went away.”



## CHAPTER IX.

“The whiles they spake they heard a ruefull shrieke  
Of one loud crying, which they streightway ghest  
That it was she the which for help did shrieke,  
Tho, looking up unto the cry to lest,  
They saw that carle from far with hand unblest  
Hayling the maiden by the yellow heare,  
That all her garments from her snowy brest,  
And from her head her lockes he nigh did teare,  
Ne would he spare for pittie nor refraine for feare.”

*Fairy Queen*, vi. i. xvii.

Now as to Tom, after becoming hopelessly pounded by the railway, in common with the rest of field, he was not content like them to gallop off to the crossing, but must needs find out a way of his own, which resulted in his losing himself altogether, and wandering aimlessly for some long time about the country.

At last he came to a river, which a man

ploughing told him was fordable at a certain place, and after crossing it he would be able to get on to the high road ; so off he went to the prescribed place, and found the banks steep on both sides, with deep mud at the bottom, the water somewhat higher than usual, owing to recent rains, and altogether the appearance of the ford, if ford it was, far from inviting. Still it had to be done, and so with some difficulty he induced his horse, a hard, old-fashioned customer, to creep or slip down into the water. The river was not at all wide, but it was deeper than pleasant, and the current running like a mill-race, the bottom covered with sundry great boulders over which the horse blundered and stumbled in a way that threatened a probable immersion to his rider. Nearing the other side, the water deepened so as to just take the horse off his legs in the last few yards ; but the land was safely reached, and it remained but to climb the

opposing bank. This the horse made a gallant attempt to do, but sank up to his hocks in the mud through the effort, and consequently came right back over on Tom into the water, and was instantly carried away down stream.

The girths had fortunately broken with the strain, and Tom, who had his feet in the stirrups, floated clear almost directly, together with the saddle. He had fallen quite soft, thanks to the depth of the water, and after escaping a kick on the head almost by a miracle, found himself bound to make shift to swim, with the saddle attached to one leg, as by some mysterious means he had got his foot right through the stirrup.

Now Tom could swim, that is to say, he could manage to do a few hundred yards without his clothes ; but to have hunting-boots on, and a saddle as well, was a complication he certainly had never anticipated when educating

himself in the art of escaping drowning. And now he felt himself in a very serious predicament, as he was borne swiftly along by the current, every movement he tried to make with his legs seeming, if anything, to pull him down.

But Tom was a cool hand enough, and never lost his presence of mind ; so he concluded that if he could keep himself afloat by mere paddling with his hands he was bound to come on shore sooner or later, and he betook himself therefore to that method of salvation. It must be remembered that Tom was but a completely elementary swimmer, and what seems easy to the initiated was a work of huge difficulty to him. Still he was managing all right, and was thankful to find the current rapidly taking him to the shore whereon he wished to be, when, lo ! there was a sudden check and pull at his leg. The rushing stream came bubbling over him as he sunk a short way beneath it,

his foot held fast by the accursed stirrup-iron.

It was obvious what had happened, and it flashed across him in a moment—the other stirrup had caught in something, and he was a prisoner. In still water it would not have been so hopeless, but as it was, the awful power of the stream kept him at full tension away from his fetter, and impatient of his body thus lying as an obstacle in its way, caused the water to surge up over him, at times immersing him altogether; indeed, it was only by the most extreme efforts he could keep his head occasionally above water.

I have said Tom had plenty of presence of mind, but surely this was an occasion in which any one might be pardoned for giving up hope. For a moment he was inclined absolutely to struggle in the wild and useless fashion of a drowning man; but it was only a moment. Quick as thought he pulled himself together,

his wits rising to the occasion, and felt for his knife, regardless of the water burying him in its remorseless flow. Alas ! for once in a way he had left his knife at home. An old useless knife it was, to all intents and purposes ; he had carried it from mere habit for more than a year after it had become disreputable and fractured, and now just when he wanted it he had left it at home !

There was but one more chance : raising his head with a great effort above the water—for he was rapidly becoming exhausted now—he took a long breath, and then deliberately curled up so as to get hold of his foot ; from thence seizing the stirrup - leather, and reaching further on to the saddle, (all this of course under water, and he had never even dived in his life !) with the energy of despair bearing up against the volume of surging flood, he pulled the stirrup-leather away from the saddle,—fortunately it was not very stiff,—and

in an instant was free and on the surface. The current now doing him a good turn whirled him swiftly into shallow water ; but had he not come upon a friendly tree-trunk jutting into the stream, which afforded him a support, it is questionable whether he would not have been drowned after all from sheer exhaustion. However, he lay across this tree-trunk in safety—he never knew how long ; but when he recovered himself the evening was drawing on, and he staggered in bewilderment up the bank, for once in his life sincerely thanking God for his preservation.

Looking around, what should he see but old Cæsar, his horse, quietly attempting to graze in the next field ; and that was one satisfactory point, at all events. Cæsar was easily caught, but being without a saddle Tom was too weak to mount him until he had led him to a gate. Having succeeded in getting up, he made for the road, which was a short distance in front,

but very soon began to feel that he had had too much taken out of him to enable him to exert himself any more ; and fear lest he should roll off the horse, or do some other foolish thing, constrained him to pull up at a neat little house standing all by itself, and slip down on the ground while he was yet able. A face came to one of the windows—it was that of a female, long-visaged and somewhat undershot—apparently about fifty years old, but evidently assuming a much greater degree of juvenility. It was not a wholly unpleasant face, though ugly and of consequential expression. Tom feebly beckoned, and tried to take off his hat. The face looked mystified, but finally smiled, left the window, and came to the door, which being opened, disclosed the owner of the face as being a tall and somewhat gaunt lady decked out in most youthful garb. To her Tom told in a few words what had befallen him, mentioned his name, and asked her to



put him up for a while, as he was dead beat, and couldn't get any further.

"Blackburn!" ruminated the lady. "Are you the Blackburn Mary Jolliffe knows?"

"Yes."

"Oh! then I should know you well. My name's Whytehead; you'll have heard of me no doubt; but come in, come in. Mary, get the brandy, and take the gentleman's horse round to the cow-house. Stay, I'll get the brandy myself; it's very good, I'm told. There, drink that—that'll *evaporate* you."

All this was said very rapidly, with a thick, spluttering sort of utterance, the dialect being much inclined to Yorkshire, and the last sentence savouring so much of Mrs. Malaprop as to actually draw forth a smile from Tom, on whom the brandy produced a marvellous effect.

He knew Miss Whytehead well, however, by reputation, and was well aware of what he

had to expect. But what of his horse? He was sufficiently invigorated now to think of that, and he asked Miss Whytehead if she would excuse his going to look after the old beast.

“Oh, the girl will tie him up all safely,” said she; “you needn’t be afraid.”

But Tom opined the faithful quadruped would want something more than tying up, and asked if she could give him a feed of corn. Miss Whytehead was sorry to say they had no such thing anywhere about. Was there a rug he could put over the horse? No, she hadn’t such a thing; but on seeing Tom’s distressed expression, she added, “You can take one of the old counterpanes if you like, and there’s some hay we have for the cow.”

This sounded better, so Tom asked if he could have a little oatmeal and a pint of beer. This was forthcoming, and taking matters into his own hands, he proceeded to boil water and

make gruel, pouring the beer into it, Miss Whytehead the while discoursing volubly.

“I’m sure, now, to see you in these clothes, fussing about your horse, reminds me of my poor old father—such a man he used to be for horses and hunting! You’ll have heard of him no doubt; everybody has. The Whyteheads have always been well known since the Conquest, and now you see my brother occupies the old place. I do like good breeding; there is nothing like it, my father always said, in either horse or man. Your father, I believe, is a grandson of Lord Falkland, is that not so? Well, I like you all the better for it. I don’t care how poor I am, I always feel better than the people round about here.” And so on, harping on the one topic of the excellent breeding of the Whyteheads, till Tom had his gruel ready for the horse, and went out with it.

“I’m sure,” said Tom afterwards, “there is

much need for her to drive this point into one's head ; for no one would imagine her a well-bred one, to judge by her looks and the way she talks. Still, it must be true with human beings as well as horses, that they ' run in all shapes.' ”

Old Cæsar seemed very pleased with the gruel, and disposed to make the best of his present quarters. They were not palatial, truly, but at least they were wind and weather proof, though withal most crowsome and unclean underfoot. That could not be helped, however. Tom got a wisp of clean hay, and rubbed the horse down as best he could. The girl brought the counterpane, which they adjusted with sundry pieces of tape, and one long piece of tape tied right round the horse in lieu of a roller.

Hay was found and plentifully administered, Tom using some also to bed the horse down and make him comfortable ; and then with the

girl he returned to the house and sat down, dead-beat with his exertions, insomuch that Miss Whytehead, who had been sprucing herself up still more than heretofore, declared he must not think of going home that night: they would make him up a bed in the little sitting-room. She would take no denial, and Tom, who knew perfectly well that unless he greatly improved he could not possibly ride, consented with very little hesitation.

Now it must be known, that Miss Whytehead had by no means given up her hopes of matrimony. She was reported to have been once engaged, but to have suffered bitter disappointment—the lover not turning up on the appointed day. Some who told the tale developed it into a romance, to the effect that, on the evening before she was to become his wife, she saw his face looking at her from out of the water in a half-filled jug, and that at that very time the youth met his end by

falling into the flooded river Swale and being drowned.

Others, however, declared, that in reality no such thing happened, but that the faithless swain was still alive, and married to another.

After all, what did it matter? In either case there was cause for satisfaction : in the one, deep, cherished sentiments of the tragic past served to demonstrate to Miss Whytehead how different she was from the common prosaic herd, and to make her feel that she too had been subject to that Divine commingling of souls which is reserved only for the high-born of the earth ; in the other, well, surely there was some reason to rejoice if the man had never been drowned at all. Whether, however, Miss Whytehead would have rejoiced had his survival been clearly shown to her this deponent sayeth not.

But the gist of all this is, that Miss Whytehead, condemned by the death of her father

and the marriage of her sisters to a solitary life, felt a yearning for a sympathetic soul, or indeed a soul of any sort, if its owner was a man, well-favoured, young, and possessed of money. Such a one she now thought fate had cast in her way, and she determined to make Tom her own. Little did he think of the honour thus destined for him, being more intent on certain savoury odours wafted from the kitchen, which portended that he was to be fed anon. Miss Whytehead had seen a good deal of mankind, from the old hard-headed sort like her father to the more modern and fragile youths, who, as she said, had to take *Enoch's* Fruit Salt in the mornings to remove the effects of any attempt at a drink the night before. But old or young, she well knew that man, until he has been fed, is at best a morose and unimpressionable animal, so that her whole desire now was to appease Tom's appetite for food in the hopes of stealing her

way to his heart afterwards. The somewhat scanty resources of the larder were sorely tried ; but there was a brace of partridges her brother had sent her, and there was some ham and a few eggs, and there was beer.

These were soon placed before the hungering Tom, to whom they appeared more delicious than the most sumptuous meal could have done on ordinary occasions.

He sat him down and fell to with a will, Miss Whytehead modestly declining to assist him, but busying herself in attending to his wants, until, as he began to feel comfortable and refreshed, he thought, “ Really, this is a very good sort of old dame ; I’ve certainly lit on my legs coming here.”

Having consumed much ham and eggs, together with the best part of the brace of partridges, and having imbibed about a quart of the beer, which was really very good— “ Strange to say,” thought Tom, “ when there



are only women in the house !”—his tongue became loosed, and yielding to his hostess’s solicitations, he drew his chair to the fire, while she produced sundry black bottles from a cupboard,—the slave brought glasses, lemons, and the kettle,—and Miss Whytehead besought Tom to let her mix for him a drink such as her father loved.

Tom thought at first he would have preferred just then a cup of coffee, or at any rate tea ; but taking into consideration his still wet condition, and the late hour,—nearly eleven o’clock,—he concluded it would be just as well to go in for something “ hot within,” and accepted the offer, thinking the while that Miss Whytehead was a gayish sort of damsel to have all these paraphernalia of drink ready at hand.

“ Now,” said she, “ if you’ll watch me you’ll learn a recipe which I’ve never taught any one else before. My father taught me how to

make it when he broke his arm hunting, and could not do it for himself until the bones had *ignited* again."

"Indeed!" said Tom. "Well, I feel greatly honoured by your divulging it to me."

"You do, do you? Ah! but you see you're such a good-looking boy, I would tell you anything."

This rather startled Tom, but, on the whole, pleased him. All men are ridiculously vain, and prone to take in perfect good faith a compliment to their personal appearance; and then Tom was at that age when he rather liked to be called a boy, so that he answered, "I am quite sure, Miss Whytehead, you must have had many much better looking than I am who would have given anything to hear you speak to them in that way."

"Not I," incautiously broke in the lady; "at least, I mean they were all horrid, ugly men,

and I couldn't bear them ; so I've waited for some one better."

Tom now thought it time to change the subject to the drink, and watched anxiously the famous brew.

Miss Whytehead was already fussing about with the materials, and as the drink really was good it may be well to give it *in extenso*. First she stuck a lemon over with cloves and hung it by a string before the fire, asking Tom to keep turning it. This he did, getting his eyes and face—already sore with exposure—well scorched in the process. Then did Miss Whytehead take a bowl, and having placed therein eight lumps of sugar, a table-spoonful of syrup of ginger, a similar quantity of apple-jelly, and a wine-glass of brandy, she paused for a while to see how the lemon was progressing. It was beginning to crackle and spit, and had already shot a clove in Tom's face with great violence, followed by a jet of

scalding juice. Miss Whytehead, however, declared it was not nearly ready yet, and went on to pour one tumbler-glass of rum and one of Irish whiskey into the bowl, stirring it up with thoughtful countenance, and ever and anon looking at Tom in a way that made him feel uncomfortable, he didn't quite know why. He could not help noticing the while the strange angularity of her figure as she stood beside him, and he wondered to himself why a beneficent providence ever could be so careless as to turn woman out in such shapes—so utterly unfinished and rough in workmanship, as it were.

Next he thought what on earth must her drinking capacity be, or what must she deem him capable of, that she was mixing such a large “jorum”; but the lemon now claimed all his attention, it was rapidly getting brown, and exhaling the most glorious aroma.

“It will be ready directly,” cried the hostess,

in a state of great excitement. She had now placed the bowl down by the fire, and the kettle was boiling lustily. "There," said she, "that will do; put it in the bowl," and Tom with some difficulty tumbled the lemon in, while she took up the kettle and appeared to pour indiscriminately, but it seemed afterwards she had a well-known mark in the bowl, by which she knew when she had got exactly as much water as spirit. "Now, my boy," she exclaimed, in strange glee, "we let it stand here and stir it gently for ten minutes before the fire, and then you shall say what you think of it."

This time having elapsed, the ladle was called into requisition, and the two sat down on either side of the fire, with their glasses on small brackets specially placed for such a purpose. The punch was first-rate. Tom was now nearly dry, and beginning to feel decidedly happy. He praised the drink immensely, and

swore Miss Whytehead was the cleverest lady he had ever met, and he only wished there were more like her. One thing he should like to know — what was the theory which induced her to put syrup of ginger into the brew ?

“ Oh ! ” said she, “ that’s the great point of all. The syrup of ginger does away with all chance of a headache after it ; it’s a wonderful thing ; I know its effect perfectly by practising on my poor father.”

“ Well,” cried Tom, “ you *are* an amazing individual ; it’s like conjuring to be able to drink such grand stuff as this without fear of next morning. Do you know, I’m awfully glad I came here.”

“ Are you really now ? But only think what you have had to go through before you did come.”

“ Don’t care,” said Tom ; “ this is worth it all.”

Miss Whytehead coughed, half blushed, and simperingly asked, "What *do* you mean?"

"Why, the *drink*!"

Here was an anti-climax, since she quite thought Tom had wound himself up to a declaration of love. For a moment disappointment and disgust silenced the lady; then on second thoughts she reflected, "If he is so pleased with the drink, it should not be difficult for him to be pleased with the maker of it."

Then she entertained him with a long discourse on people in general, and her own family in particular, the point being as usual that no one was bred right who did not inherit the blood of the Whyteheads; condescended, however, to say that she liked Mary Jolliffe. She was one of the few people she did like, for her pride always forbade her to associate with the general run of persons who wished for her acquaintance. Her brother Mark, too, he was equally proud; by-the-bye, he was at Kirby

hunt ball that very night ; she would have been there, but couldn't get a dress in time.

Tom, meanwhile, had replenished his glass, and was thoroughly complacent. Presently he broke in, "I only wish I always had some one to make punch like this for me."

"You'd better engage me," said she, with a feeble titter.

Tom, who was far too much wrapt up in his own enjoyment to give the slightest attention now to the turn the conversation was taking, went on without the smallest serious meaning: "All right, that's a bargain ; you shall be my Hebe, my cup-bearer, punch-brewer, or what you will ; I shall take you with me through the world."

"Oh, but that wouldn't be proper."

"Then of course I must marry you ; do you agree to that?" laughed he, merely, as he thought, filling up the time pleasantly with a little inane fooling.



Judge then his surprise when she calmly said, after a moment's pause, "Mr. Blackburn, I do agree. It would be idle for me to deny that with me, as with you, this is a case of love at first sight," and rising up, she flung herself upon him, and hung hysterically to his neck.

Tom glanced hurriedly around. There was that confounded girl standing at the door. How long had she been there? He grasped the difficulty of his position at once, and was fairly overcome by it.

"Good God!" he cried, "isn't it time we were going to bed?"

"I see," she answered, "the excitement and the hard day have been too much for you. Come, dear, come, I will show you to your room," and Tom mechanically followed to the apartment, where a shakedown had been prepared for him, felt her kiss him, and actually was not certain whether he did not kiss her. She closed the door and was gone.

Tom stood some while in a bewildered condition, then muttered to himself, "Well, this is beyond everything; I'll sleep on it anyhow," and tired out, he betook him to rest, donning a beautifully frilled night-gown that was placed ready, and wondering what his boots and breeches would be like in the morning. He was asleep almost directly, nor did he dream.

How long he had been asleep he knew not, but he was aroused by a series of awful shrieks proceeding from up-stairs—so awful that he did not pause to put on any additional garments, but ran, just as he was, out of his room to that from which the noise was proceeding.

Bursting in, he saw the figure of a man attempting to stifle the shrieks of some one in bed, no doubt Miss Whytehead; while another was just entering through the window, in fact, his body was half in. Tom's ready presence of mind told him that his plan was

to go first at the man who was climbing in, for if he once let him in he would have two assailants together ; so in an instant he rushed to the window, and gave the would-be burglar one, two, fair from the shoulder into his ugly countenance, and the man dropped back as if shot.

Tom heard him fall with a great thud below, and then turned to the other, who was coming at him with something in his hand that looked like a life-preserver.

But the man was, like most of his kind, an utter cur when boldly tackled, and as Tom rushed on him without a moment's hesitation, the life-preserver fell from his grasp as he made a feeble effort to use it. Tom closed with him at once, overpowering him as easily as he would a child, looked at the window, with the intention of throwing him down from it, but thought he would not ; so carried him out on to the landing, and partly kicked and

partly threw him down-stairs; then opened the front door, turned the man towards him, gave him one right-hander full in the face, which knocked him backwards into the shrubs, by way of a reminiscence, and walked up-stairs again to see how Miss Whytehead was, actually forgetting to shut the door behind him.

He went straight into her room, never thinking of his *déshabille*, for it was no time to do so. She was there, but not fainting or in hysterics, simply wildly excited and rushing about the room, the gauntness of her form terribly expressed by the scanty garb that could hardly be said to make a pretence of concealing it.

The first thing she said was: "Oh, have you locked the front door?"

"No, by Jove! I haven't," said Tom, and was about to run down to do it when, quick as thought, Miss Whytehead turned the key in her own door, removed it, and said,

“No, no, dear Tom, you shall risk your life no more for me. If they come back now we are safe. I don’t care what any one says, you shall stay here till daylight; self-preservation is the first law of nature,” and with that she would have fallen fainting to the floor, but that Tom caught her up, chiefly with a view to secure the key; but she had secreted it somewhere about her, and he could hardly search minutely.

She soon recovered and quietly went to bed, offering Tom a rug to put over himself, which he thankfully accepted, after vainly imploring her to give him the key and let him out. She declared he would be murdered if he left the room, and so he was obliged to stay.

But the worst was to come. There was a sound of a trap driving past. It stopped, and somebody got out, walked into the house by the open front door, and came presently upstairs.

“Oh!” shrieked Miss Whytehead, “they are coming again. They have been away for help, and have brought the whole gang of *burghers* down. Tom, dear, darling Tom, I have at least this consolation—you are with me.”

“Hush,” muttered Tom, hearing that the steps had stopped outside the door; and the person, whoever he or she might be, knocked. “Give me the key,” said Tom in a whisper.

“Oh, no, my own dearest Tom. You *shall* not open the door; we shall be murdered.”

“Susan,” said a gruff voice outside, “open the door. It’s I—Mark, your brother.”

The sudden reaction was too much for the lady; she screamed, threw down the key, and Tom, without a moment’s hesitation, opened the door.

To them entered Mr. Mark Whytehead, who was on his way driving back from the Kirby Ball, and seeing the front door open had

stopped and come to investigate. He had possessed himself of a candle, and surveyed the couple in their sparse attire.

This time Tom's presence of mind deserted him, and he only stared confusedly.

"Well, Susan," said Mark, "I little thought you would do this, though I knew you were bad enough. Below I find nothing but bottles, glasses, and signs of drink; the very front door left open, owing to the horrid oblivious state you have been in; but upstairs here,—‘dear, darling Tom,’ indeed! Oh! shameful, shameful! D—n you, fellow, who are you?"

"Fellow yourself," replied Tom, who had now reached a sullen state of sensibility. "I've had plenty of you and your sister," and brushing past the outraged relative he went down-stairs, immediately proceeded to put on his clothes, finding huge difficulty with the boots; and with the clamorous voices still

holding forth up - stairs he left the house, went to the cow-house, put the bridle on Cæsar, and getting on as best he could, rode off, leaving the old counterpane to the tender mercies of the cow, just as the sun was rising.

Cæsar went very stiff at first, but soon was all right, and Tom's spirits rose as he felt the fresh air and freedom once more. Many ejaculations, however, did he mutter to himself, until he rode into Norton just in time to have a bath and dress for breakfast on Christmas Day. It may well be conjectured that his night's adventures were not revealed in full to those who asked where he had been and what he had been doing.











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